

THE MUSLIM WORLD

CO-EDITORS: IBRAHIM M. ABU-RABI¹
AND JANE I. SMITH

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: ALWI SHIHAB

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BOOK REVIEWS

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WILLEM A. BIJLEFELD



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REPUBLICAN EPISTEMOLOGY AND ISLAMIC DISCOURSES IN TURKEY IN THE 1990S*

Introduction

In the course of the past decade, the question of identity in the Turkish context has acquired an increasing significance. With the emergence of trends which placed the question of identity outside of the official realm, the people who live on this land began to stagger between local and national as well as traditional and modern identities. This has paved the way for the explosion of multiple identities which were stifled earlier by way of attachment to an official, monolithic, absolute Turkish identity that was engineered during the early Republican years. The increasing significance of Islamic discourses accelerated the process of the decentring of the official Turkish identity during this time.

It is interesting to note that such a crisis of the official ideology in Turkey coincides with the weakening of the foundations of modernity in the West. With the decentring of the West and the dissolution of universalism and cultural essentialism of modernity, the European identity has acquired some relativism as well. Accordingly, it is possible to witness the emergence of what Umberto Eco has aptly called "neomedieval" identities.¹ The weakening of the foundations of modernity had an impact on the modernizing contexts and especially put into question the certainties of Kemalism in Turkey. The following text maintains that the ensuing fragmentation of identities in Turkey is surrounded by motifs of a Republican epistemology. Epistemology refers to theory that investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of knowledge.² Republican epistemology

* I would like to acknowledge Langton Baker for his invaluable comments and Menderes Çınar for sharing with me his insights and for providing me with some of the readings on the Islamic discourses. Nevertheless, the responsibility for the arguments elaborated in this article remains solely with the author

¹ Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 73.

² The notion of epistemology, here, is used in the Mannheimian, historicist sense, and therefore, tries to cut across the subject/object polarity. Historicist theory of knowledge (epistemology) is situated in contradistinction with both an absolutist position based on the truth/falsity of the contents of knowledge, and a relativist position which envisions a multiplicity of truths and hence, the impossibility of absolutism. The "relationism" of Mannheim's theory of knowledge, in contrast, is non-evaluative since it maintains that knowledge can be analyzed only in a "given type of historical existence." Republican epistemology, throughout this text, is used in reference to Mannheim's historicist theory of knowledge and hence, does not warrant any truth/falsity in terms of the contents of knowledge, but is rather non-evaluative. See, Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (San Diego, New York, London: A Harvest HBJ Book, 1936), esp. 86.

has two distinguishing features. First of all, it is based on an essentialist distinction on the part of the Republican elite between the East and the West, and/or the Orient and the Occident. The knowledge of the Republican elite about the world is constructed on such an essentialist distinction between the authentic self and the privileged other (the civilized West). Such an epistemology finds its origins in the Ottoman statesmen's initial encounters with the West as the Other and in their efforts to carve out a modern identity in the course of the nineteenth century. Such essentialist foundations of knowledge reached a climax in the early Republican years that found an expression in the project of secularization. In sum, Republican epistemology refers to a modernist trend that inherently embraces an essentialist distinction between the self and the privileged other. Secondly, it is based on a managerial attitude on the part of the Republican elite who identify civilization as a societal goal and from that point onwards unleash processes of social engineering geared towards constructing a modern national identity at the expense of traditional, local, religious identities. In sum, the distinguishing features of the Republican epistemology are essentialism and the ensuing constructedness of social phenomena. One of the key points of the following text is its acknowledgment of a similar essentialism and constructedness within the Islamic discourses that purport to challenge the official Republican Turkish identity.

Although constructedness of social phenomena is a feature of all societies in the process of carving out a modern identity, some non-Western modernizing contexts such as Turkey display a severing of links with past traditions. One of the paradoxes of modern nations is that they generally claim to be natural human communities rooted in antiquity whereas they have a constructed, novel component.³ Modern national identities are constructed by a high culture at the expense of local, fragmented low cultures.⁴ Hence, with the advent of industrialization and the construction and/or "invention" of modern national identities, there begins the process of separation of the modern, rational self of the high culture and a low culture which lacks what the modern self has. This results in the delinking of the modern, central, urban cultures and the traditional, peripheral, rural cultures. At the international level, the perpetuation of such binary logic results in a process of othering which was aptly described by Edward Said as the "Orientalization of the Orient."⁵ Accordingly, the Orient was Orientalized by virtue of a relationship of power, of domination between the West and the East. As Said puts it: Orientalism "fairly stands

³ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 14.

⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983).

⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 5.

for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled."⁶

It is, then, possible to refer to an "invented tradition" as a distinguishing feature of modernity in all societies, Western and non-Western. According to Hobsbawm:

Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally *attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past*⁷ (italics mine).

Still, the invention of tradition acquires a distinct characteristic in the non-Western modernizing contexts since this may not imply a continuity with past traditions. Contrary to the processes in the modern, Western contexts where an attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past is considered "normal" by Hobsbawm, in *the modernizing, non-Western contexts, the process of invention of tradition involves a break, a discontinuity with the past*. Such a discontinuity with the past lies behind the state of amnesia which has prevailed in Turkey ever since the foundation of the Republic in the early 1920s.⁸ This is an implication of what is referred to as the Republican epistemology in the Turkish context in the following pages.

In what follows, first of all, the initial efforts towards constructing a modern Turkish identity during the mid-nineteenth century, which prompted the politicization of Islam, will be portrayed. Secondly, the Republican efforts towards establishing an official Turkish identity will be discussed with special reference to quite distinct policies of secularization. In the last part, the discourses of the three Islamic groups in Turkey, namely, the political Islamists organized around a political party, Muslim intellectuals, and a community of moderate Islamists will be evaluated by way of reference to the Republican epistemology.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 1.

⁸ Such a state of amnesia warrants a rewriting of Turkish history by re-establishing severed links with the past, i.e. a process of societal psychotherapy which seems imminent in the current debates that try to come to grips with the decomposition of identities. See Ayşe Kadioğlu, "Milletini Arayan Devlet: Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Açmazları," *Türkiye Günlüğü* 33 (1995): 91-101.

Progress for the Sake of Order: Tanzimat and Encounters with the West

Ever since the beginnings of modernization of the Ottoman institutions in the course of the eighteenth century, the primary goal of the modernizers had been the preservation of the state. Modernization attempts started within the military institution and were geared towards establishing disciplined troops trained in accordance with the recommendations of Western military advisors. At the turn of the nineteenth century, modernization involved areas other than the military as well. The Tanzimat Reforms, which were introduced by the Tanzimat Charter in 1839, involved a major reorganization at the levels of provincial administration, education and the judiciary. Tanzimat—as the term indicated—involved the restructuring and re-ordering of the fundamental institutions of the Ottoman system. Still, all the institutional novelties of the Tanzimat were geared towards preserving the existing order, i.e. *nizam-ı alem*.⁹ Hence, first of all, it is possible to argue that modernization was introduced within the Ottoman state system at the turn of the nineteenth century for the sake of preserving order. Secondly, with the introduction of modernization, the predominant debates of the time focused on the limits of that modernization. The extent and degree of modernization constituted the main problematique of the Tanzimat era.

Starting with the Tanzimat reforms, there began the Ottoman statesmen's encounters with the West that shook the fundamental premises of the old Ottoman order (*kanun-u kadim*). The traditional millet system, based on religious stratification of the Muslims and non-Muslims, began to be dismantled in the course of the Tanzimat reforms. The reforms pertaining to the equality of the Muslim and non-Muslim peoples (*müsavat*) crystallized in the Reform Edict of 1856 (*Islahat Fermani*). The Reform Edict promised full equality to the non-Muslims which included equality in liability for military service as well as for entry to government positions and schools.¹⁰ According to Niyazi Berkes, the Reform Edict of 1856 involved more concrete measures geared towards continuing a modernist trend that was set by the Tanzimat Charter.¹¹ Since such measures affected the day to day activities of the people, it generated a major uproar in the society. The Reform Edict of 1856 and its implications symbolized the deepening of a rupture between the Muslims (*millet-i hakime*) and the non-Muslims (*millet-i mahkume*) within the empire.

⁹ Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay, "Tanzimat Neyi Tanzim Etti," *Argos*, 15 November 1989, 57-63.

¹⁰ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), II: 100.

¹¹ Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma* (İstanbul: Doğu-Batı Yayınları, 1978), 211.

Behind the Reform Edict of 1856 lay the Tanzimat statesmen's eagerness to establish amiable diplomatic relations with the Western powers. The issue of the equality of the Muslim and non-Muslim peoples was one of the crucial items which was on the list of preconditions of the European powers for establishing such relations with the Ottomans. The Edict itself was prepared by a commission of representatives from England, France, Austria, and the Ottoman state. According to the provisions of the Edict, the Ottomans promised the Western powers to end the distinctive and discriminatory head tax which was placed on the non-Muslims. Instead, a simple military-service tax was imposed on non-Muslims who were liable for conscription under the law. The military-service tax was less than the equivalent tax imposed on Muslims for exemption.¹² Such measures prompted an uproar among the Muslims within the empire who felt that the ground beneath them was increasingly becoming more slippery and that they were losing their old privileged status. According to Türköne, the Reform Edict of 1856 and the issue of equality of the Muslims and non-Muslims created a feeling of resentment among the Muslim populace and was expressed in the writings of the Young Ottomans who referred to the edict as the Edict of Privileges (*İmtiyaz Fermanı*).¹³ Hence, the reaction to the Reform Edict was a driving force of Islamism in the Ottoman society.¹⁴

With the triggering of ethnic nationalisms within the empire and the efforts at modernization prompted by Tanzimat statesmen in order to preserve the state, the premises of the established Ottoman order were greatly shaken. By the middle of the nineteenth century, it became clear that the question of identity emerged in the Ottoman empire as a result of the Tanzimat reforms which dismantled the old order and along with it old communal, provincial identities which were in accordance with the Ottoman millet system. It was at this particular historical juncture that the need to construct a modern identity for the Muslim peoples of the empire emerged. The move from a given to a constructed social environment accompanied the Ottomans' encounters with the West which came to be viewed as the privileged Other. The efforts of the Ottoman intellectuals in the context of this movement from given to constructed identities crystal-

¹² Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* II: 100.

¹³ Mümtaz'er Türköne, *Siyasi İdeoloji Olarak İslamcılığın Doğuşu* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994), 68. Türköne reviews The reactions of Ziya Paşa (1825-1880), Namik Kemal (1840-1888), and Ali Suavi (1838-1878) to the Reform Edict of 1856.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 71. See also 67-68, where Türköne points to the emergence of a secret organization in İstanbul in 1859 as a response to the Reform Edict of 1856. This organization was based on Islamic premises and was the driving force behind the Kuleli incident that was geared towards reinstituting an order based on *şeriat*. The attempted coup initiated by the members of the organization led by Şeyh Ahmed failed. Yet, the Kuleli incident revealed the seeds of political Islam in the aftermath of the Reform Edict of 1856.

lized in the social engineering projects of Ottomanism (*İttihad-i Osmani*), Islamism (*İttihad-i İslam*), and finally Turkish nationalism (*İttihad-i Etrak*) with the activities of the Young Turks and the Committee of Union and Progress at the turn of the twentieth century.

The Tanzimat reforms opting for modernizing the established traditional structures produced the dual categories of Tanzimat thought. These dual categories were quite akin to the dual categories of modernization theory which established the practice of studying societies as two, ideal-typical polar types, namely traditional and modern. Accordingly, traditional came to represent a residual category, an Other, defined by way of reference to a privileged, modern Self. With the beginnings of modernization in the Ottoman empire and encounters with the West, it is possible to observe the establishment of an essentialist thought structure which was based on the dual categories of Occident-Orient, West-East, Modern-Traditional, Civilization-Culture, Science-Religion. This process involved the reproduction of the dual structures of modernity in the modernization context. It was accompanied by an effort to construct a novel, modern identity on the part of the Ottoman intelligentsia.

Accordingly, the distinguishing feature of the modernization context involved placing the cart before the horse, i.e. the adoption of Western institutions before the realization of an epistemological transformation in the society that would produce a demand for them. Hence, the process of Enlightenment in the West became a project in the context of Turkish modernization. This resulted in the process of delinking from the past traditions which in turn became the major cause of the separation between the elite and the mass cultures within the Ottoman society at the end of the nineteenth century. The Republican elite perpetuated these trends by starting a process of secularization and along with it the construction of a secular, national identity.

Order for the Sake of Progress: The Republican Project of Modernization

The Republican efforts at modernization were much more pronounced than the ones in the Tanzimat era. The Republican elite undertook a project of wholesale Westernization. Since there was no radical philosophical rupture from established thought patterns similar to the process of Enlightenment in the European context, Enlightenment was constructed from above in the Republican context, i.e., it became a project. An evaluation of the nature of the Republican secularization is crucial in understanding the constructed nature of the Republican reality.

There is considerable disagreement in the literature as to whether the notion of *din u devlet* (religion and the state) connotes the existence of a

theocratic structure within the Ottoman empire. In a highly stimulating article on the nature of Turkish secularism, Nur Vergin aptly underlines the lack of an agreement among the students of the subject regarding the theocratic nature of the Ottoman state.¹⁵ Vergin maintains that the existing evidence is not adequate to point to the theocratic nature of the Ottoman state. She rather refers to the dialogue, and the blissful coexistence of state and religion in the Ottoman system. It is not the purpose of this text to review or to evaluate the debates regarding the existence or lack of a theocratic structure within the Ottoman system. Rather, it is sufficient to point to the implications of such differing views on the current secularism debates. While a conviction regarding the theocratic structure of the Ottoman system justifies the adoption of the Republican secularization attempts, analyses that question such a conviction regarding the Ottoman system open up new avenues for establishing a continuity between the current state of the Republic which is plagued by clashes of the secularist and Islamist camps and the Ottoman past. Binnaz Toprak's analysis of secularization in the Turkish Republic, for instance, largely draws upon the former conviction.¹⁶ It is largely based on an axiomatic proposition regarding the impossibility of separating the religious realm from the secular one in Muslim societies because of the nature of Islam. This paves her way to saying that:

... if separation of Islam and politics seemed difficult, then the former at least could be made subservient to the latter. Hence, religious institutions were linked to the state bureaucracy rather than to create an autonomous organization.¹⁷

Contrarily, analyses—like Vergin's—that question such an axiomatic proposition regarding the unity of state and religion in Islam can perhaps be distinguished as an effort at inventing tradition and/or belated invention of tradition in the post-Republican era.

It is clear to any student of Turkish politics that the Republican project of secularization did not involve a separation of state and religion in the Lockean sense of the word. John Locke (1632-1704) formulated the classical liberal position on secularism as follows:

Political society is instituted for no other end but only to secure every man's possession of the things of this life. The care of each man's soul, and of the things of heaven, which neither does belong

¹⁵ Nur Vergin, "Din ve Devlet İlişkileri: Düşüncenin 'Bitmeyen Senfoni'si," *Türkiye Günlüğü* 29 (1994): 5-23.

¹⁶ Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

to the commonwealth nor can be subject to it, is left entirely to every man's self.¹⁸

Locke had a view of religion as an entirely private matter and churches as voluntary associations.

The Republican Turkish secularism was more akin to the French secularist model which was knitted by Comtean, positivist motifs. By the middle of the nineteenth century, French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857) developed the basic premises of Positivism.¹⁹ Comte believed that history progressed from theological, to metaphysical, to positive modes of thought and related types of social organization. Accordingly, Comte fostered a view of progress by turning away from theology and abstract speculation towards the scientific study of nature and society. He foresaw analyses of societies by utilizing natural science methods of empirical observation which would pave the way to an evolution under the supervision of specialists or social engineers. All in all, Comtean positivism fostered both social engineering and evolutionism, which came to be symbolized in its motto: Order and Progress.

In fostering social engineering, positivism turned into a project. Positive philosophy, while advocating a turn away from theology and abstract speculation, instilled a trend which substituted a secularized, human religion in place of theology. In this new secular religion, otherworldly God is replaced by humanity. With the advent of Comtean Positive philosophy, medieval theology is replaced by contemporary sociology.²⁰ Comte held an instrumental view regarding both science and religion. He elevated society and humanity to the level of God and placed science and religion at its service. Perhaps, one of the most significant implications of Positive philosophy was reflected in the secularization policies of the French Third Republic. Vergin points to the significance of the "secularist" (as opposed to secular) policies of the ministers of the French Third Republic who maintained that they would be tolerant towards religious beliefs but would not compromise when it came to the premises of positivism.²¹ Hence, the positivism of the ideologues of the Third Republic fostered policies which were geared towards shaping a non-theological, secular conscience at its schools that were the most common arena of clashes between religious

¹⁸ Locke's views on the separation of state and religion were expressed in *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) in J.W. Gough, ed., *The Second Treatise of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), see esp. 155.

¹⁹ For a coherent review of Comtean positivism see Russel Keat and John Urry, *Social Theory as Science* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975). See also Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, trans., Harriet Martineau (London: Chapman, 1853).

²⁰ Vergin, "Din ve Devlet İlişkileri," 11.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

beliefs and positivist ideology.²² There is no doubt that secularist thought which emanated from Positive philosophy was situated *vis à vis* theology. In fact, it was situated in a privileged position vis à vis theology along the evolutionary trend which would shape the contours of the modernization theories a century later. In doing so, it established secularism as an end. It gave secularism a teleological character. The classical liberal notion of secularism was a means towards private and public happiness. It is exactly at this point that the Lockean and Comtean views differed from each other: while the former represented a view of secularism as a means towards private and public happiness, the latter, secularist view gave secularism a teleological as well as a theological character. It is the latter view which formed the backbone of Kemalist secularization.

Republican Epistemology and Hyperrealism

Republican reforms aimed at constructing a national identity as well as establishing political legitimacy based on secular appeals. The Republican project of Westernization "showed a clear distaste for religion,"²³ since its founders, caught in positivist motifs, were convinced that Islam was the cause of the backwardness of the Ottomans. Republican reforms prompted a dismantling of the religious establishment while simultaneously constructing secularist arrangements at various levels. With the onset of the modernization of the Ottoman institutions, there began a centralized tendency to construct social phenomena on the part of the Tanzimat statesmen. Later, this tendency culminated in a Republican epistemology with the introduction of the Republican reforms.

With the onset of modernization, and the process of recoiling identities in a world laden with nationalist motifs, the Ottoman and/or Islamic Self came to be identified in reference to a privileged, modern Other, i.e. the West. The literary currents of the late nineteenth century, on the one hand, grappled with the question of constructing a modern national identity in the aftermath of encounters with the West within and outside of the empire, while they tried to portray the compatibility of Islam with modernity, on the other. The prevailing idea of the times was to adopt the "good" aspects of the West such as its technological superiority while

²² The educational establishment still continues to be an arena of clashes between religious beliefs and secularist views in France. In the course of the 1980s, whether the Muslim students wearing the headscarf should be admitted to schools or not was a major source of dispute. Interestingly, a similar dispute erupted between the secularist and religious groups in Turkey at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s.

²³ Şerif Mardin, "The European Culture and the Development of Modern Turkey," Ahmet Evin and Geoffrey Denton, eds., *Turkey and the European Community* (Opladen: Leske, Budrich, 1990), 13-23, esp. 21

rejecting its "bad" aspects such as its culture and religion. A similar trend was expressed in the separation of Culture and Civilization, the dual notions which the late Tanzimat writers were so keen on synthesizing.²⁴ Since such an act of synthesizing involved a construction of social phenomena, it is possible to locate the beginnings of social engineering projects which purported to constitute a modern identity in the Tanzimat era. Such projects included Ottomanism, Islamism, Turkism. Still, the genesis of the Young Ottoman thought, despite the beginnings of an epistemology based on constructedness, contained themes which reflected a continuity with the earlier Ottoman ethos. What distinguished the Republican period was an emphasis on progress, and hence, Westernization. Whereas earlier, progress was mainly acknowledged for the sake of order, the goal of progress and wholesale Westernization was brought to the forefront as the basic goal during the early years of the Republic. The Republican elite, by adopting a view of teleological secularism, unleashed the Islamic bond which kept the Ottoman system intact. In doing so, they started a tradition of discontinuity with the past which culminated in a state of amnesia imbued in the psyche of the "new Turks."²⁵ The difference of such a route from the "invention of tradition" was explained above. Hence, a tradition of social engineering which began with modernization efforts during the Tanzimat era reached its climax with the Republican epistemology that prompted a rupture from the Islamic past. The evolution of this epistemology starting with the Tanzimat era and its accentuation during the early Republican period portrays the dilemma of progress in the modernization context.

Two consequences of the Republican reforms seem significant in the present context. First of all, by adopting a secularist approach in conjunction with the Republican epistemology, the Republican reforms dismantled the major functions of Islamic arrangements in the society. Şerif Mardin maintains that religion performed a double function in the Ottoman empire. While on the one hand it was the most important link between the center and periphery, and hence a reference for the rulers in their relation to the ruled, it also offered mechanisms for social cohesion

²⁴ See my account of the significance of the dual notions of Culture and Civilization rooted in the Romantic and Enlightenment philosophies respectively, and how an attempt to synthesize them paves the way to the paradox of Turkish nationalism. Ayşe Kadioğlu, "The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism and the Construction of Official Identity," *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 1996): 177-94. Partha Chatterjee points to the way such a paradox accentuates the role of the state in Eastern nationalisms. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

²⁵ The notion "the new Turks" is used by Eleanor Bisbee, an American missionary who describes the Turkish revolution from outside. Eleanor Bisbee, *The New Turks: Pioneers of the Republic, 1920-1950* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951).

to the ruled.²⁶ Secularist arrangements of the Republic undid the religious bond between the elite and the mass cultures and accentuated the delinking of the center and the periphery in Turkey. This, in turn, furthered the premises of the Republican epistemology which continued to impose from above elite projects which remained alien to the mass culture. The efforts of the Republican elite were geared towards greater centralization in the aftermath of peripheral revolts. Such an attitude on the part of the Republican elite further separated the center and the periphery. For instance, in the period after the Menemen incident, a religious peripheral revolt which took place in November 1930, the Republican elite launched the ideology of Kemalism in accordance with the principles adopted at the Third Party Congress of the Republican People's Party. Accordingly, the six fundamental and unchanging principles of the regime were defined as Republicanism, Nationalism, Populism, Etatism, Secularism, and Revolutionism/Reformism. Moreover, in January 1932, the Republican elite started the publication of a monthly called *Kadro* which was geared towards creating a Republican ideology.

Secondly, it is important to emphasize that the secularist policies of the Republic which aimed at dismantling the Islamic societal arrangements were, nevertheless, laden with Islamic motifs since Islam constituted the medium of communication between the elite and the mass cultures. Although the Republican elite were moved by a disgust towards religion, they sometimes resorted to religious symbols in their behavior.²⁷ They resolved the dilemma of the intellectuals in a modernizing context, caught between the urge to Westernize and to retain a pristine identity, by paying lip service to the Islamic symbols. In Chatterjee's words, "the philosopher-kings of the 'underdeveloped' world all act as westernizers, and all talk like *narodniks*."²⁸ Hence, the religious symbols and themes continued to be predominant within the discourse of the Republican elite despite their apparent dislike of Islamic motifs.

Mardin maintains that the Turkish revolution was not the design of a discontented bourgeoisie nor was it prompted by peasant dissatisfaction. It did not have as its target a major infra-structural overhaul. It rather remained as "a revolution of values."²⁹ The alteration of the symbolic system of society in conjunction with progress was more significant than

²⁶ In fact, Mardin maintains that while elite, orthodox Islam provided the basis of upper class ideology, folk Islam of the *derriş* orders became the basis of social cohesion of the masses. Şerif Mardin, "Ideology and Religion in the Turkish Revolution," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2 (1971): 197-211, esp. 208-9.

²⁷ Mardin compares this disgust of the Republican elite towards religion to Voltaire's hatred of the Church. Mardin, "Ideology and Religion in the Turkish Revolution," 208.

²⁸ Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, 4.

²⁹ Mardin, "Ideology and Religion in the Turkish Revolution," 209.

any blows dealt to the infra-structure. Hence, the Turkish revolution had paved the way to a political culture akin to hyperreality since it contained numerous motifs which looked real, although they were largely manufactured.

The hyperreal condition produced as a result of the nature of the Turkish revolution can best be described by the emphasis laid on images in modern Turkey. I have elsewhere discussed the significance of the fierce disputes between the Islamic turbaned women and secularist, Kemalist women (whom I call *modernes de robe*) which began to occupy the Turkish political agenda since the second half of the 1980s.³⁰ These disputes usually took the form of a fight over costumes and other symbols of Islamist and secularist views. The display of Atatürk's modern, civil, Western costumes in the Atatürk Mausoleum, the popular naming of western dress tie for men as the "rein of civilization," the various ambivalent styles that Turkish music has taken by a strange dynamics of impositions from above and resistances from the popular culture,³¹ all point to the significance of images, made and unmade, in the Turkish context. The image of modernity has always carried a substantial weight within the Turkish modernization project. Not surprisingly, this has placed Turkish women in the display window of this project. Perhaps, the distinguishing feature of the modernizing reforms was the hyperreal condition that they had produced. This was largely the result of the Republican elite's managerial attitude to the world of images and their urge to construct them in line with their project of wholesale Westernization.

The Islamic discourses in the 1990s, too, pay lip service to the secularist symbols and images just as much as the secularist Republicans utilized Islamic symbols and images. It is interesting to note that the Muslim intellectuals of the 1990s are very much a product of the secularist Republican institutions. They are well trained in secularist concepts as well as Western historiography. Still, the tide has turned to a certain extent since the Muslim intellectuals of the 1990s, as opposed to their Republican counterparts, seem to talk like Westerners but act like *narodniks*. We now turn to some aspects of the Islamic discourses of the 1990s.

³⁰ Ayşe Kadioğlu, "Women's Subordination in Turkey: Is Islam Really the Villain?" *Middle East Journal* 48, no. 4, (Autumn 1994): 645-61.

³¹ See, Orhan Tekelioğlu, "Türk Popunun Tarihsel Arkaplanı," *Toplum ve Bilim* 67 (1995): 157-78. See also by the same author, "The Rise of Spontaneous Synthesis: The Historical Background of Turkish Popular Music," *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2, (April 1996): 194-216.

Islamic Discourses in the 1990s

Kemalism tried to marginalize as well as to control Islamic institutions. However, this did not lead to the disappearance of Islam from the public realm. It rather paved the way to its politicization. Hence, Kemalism produced a politicization of Islam rather than its secularization.³² The Kemalist Westernization project constructed on top of a marginalized Islamic identity contained in itself the seeds of its own destruction. Kemalism turned out to be a modern *cul de sac*. Accordingly, the more it succeeded, the less able it became to rejuvenate its discourse. While originally, the Kemalist project was based on a split between the modern and traditional cultures, its very success diminished the physical distance between these two cultures. As a result of massive internal migration, big metropolises became the very location where the modern and traditional cultures found themselves in a position to coexist. In short, the more the physical distance between these cultures was lessened the likelihood of a clash between them increased in a context in which Kemalism succeeded in dismantling the integrative role of Islam. Hence it is not surprising that modern metropolises became the locus of the struggle between political Islam and secular Kemalism. Hence, it is possible to say that one of the distinguishing features of political Islam is its rootedness in modernity, and by the same token in an epistemology based on a similar constructedness espoused by the Republican elite. In what follows, such a view of political Islam will be elaborated by referring to the discourses of the Islamic *Refah* Party (RP),³³ some Muslim intellectuals, and one of the representatives of what could be called moderate Islam in Turkey, Fethullah Gülen and his community who has increasingly been capturing the attention of the political elites and the media in the course of the past couple of years.

The Refah Party (RP) was founded in 1983 in the aftermath of the military coup of 1980 which suspended the activities of all the former political parties including the earlier Islamic political party, the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*). RP seemed to be a continuation of the earlier Islamic parties like the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*) and the National Salvation Party. Yet within a couple of years after its founding it began to portray different features. By the 1990s, RP was already behaving like a modern mass party. Whereas earlier party membership was quite limited to elements which did not aspire to a modern image,

³² Bobby Said, "Sign O'Times: Kaffirs and Infidels Fighting the Ninth Crusade," Ernesto, Laclau, ed., *The Making of Political Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 264-86, esp. 271.

³³ Since there seems to be a disagreement among the students of Turkish politics as to how to translate *Refah* Party into English, either Prosperity Party or Welfare Party, I choose to stick with the Turkish original.

in the course of the 1990s the RP leadership, for instance, began to recruit professional women who were uncovered. One of the reasons which prompted such a change within the RP was the modern image that the party leadership had adopted in the 1990s in trying to appeal to a wider electorate. In a way, the RP had begun to go beyond the archaic image given to it by the Kemalist, secularist groups in the society.

RP, at the beginning, was riding on the coattails of the earlier National Order Party and National Salvation Party. The National Salvation Party was especially instrumental in legitimizing Islamic politics in a Kemalist Republic.³⁴ RP, then, only had to consolidate that legitimacy. In doing so, it changed its image and adopted a modern style. For instance, it replaced invitation to Islamic ways (*tebliğ*) with propaganda. *Tebliğ* involved a criticism of the extent of Muslimness of RP's political opponents. RP, in the 1990s, in contrast, began to base its criticisms of opponents on the weaknesses of the latter's managerial and policy skills rather than the extent of their Muslimness. Hence, a shift from *tebliğ* to propaganda became one of the facets of the new image of RP which began to voice this worldly promises to its enlarging constituency.³⁵

The March 1994 municipal elections was one of the turning points in RP's history. In those elections RP made significant gains, its candidates winning mayoral positions in Turkey's two largest cities, Istanbul and Ankara, as well as in scores of other cities and towns. This seems to have enhanced the move from religious puritanism to modern pragmatism within the RP.

While moving away from an Islamic, closed image of a cadre party to a modern image of a mass party, RP lost some of its anti-state, civil societal characteristics. Originally, the discourse of the RP was based on a criticism of the secularist policies of the Republic, and included the idea of a rejuvenation of the Islamic identity of the Turks. This challenged the monolithic, absolute, official Turkish identity constructed during the early Republican years. Yet, RP in its new modern attire failed to contribute to the deconstruction of identities in Turkey by shifting to a centralized discourse reminiscent of the Republican epistemology. Several activities of the RP leadership during its opposition years in the course of the 1990s point to such a centralization in its discourse as opposed to democratization. First of all, members of parliament from RP voted for the lifting of the judicial privileges of the Kurdish members of parliament who have

³⁴ National Salvation Party's participation in coalition governments with the secular, system parties in the course of the 1970s was quite important in legitimizing Islamic views in mainstream politics in Turkey. See Ruşen Çakır, *Ne Şariat Ne Demokrasi, Refah Partisini Anlamak* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994), 22-6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

since been tried and sentenced to prison for fifteen years for engaging in activities against the political unity of the Turkish state. Second, despite the recruitment of more professional, modern women into the ranks of the party, they have not been included in the party lists and are not allowed to contest elections. Therefore, their *raison d'être* within the party did not go any further than fostering a modern image for the RP. Third, RP's views concerning constitutional amendments geared towards further democratization in Turkey involved a rejection of most amendments not pertaining to a de-secularization of the regime. While on the one hand RP became more pragmatic with an urge to appeal to a wider constituency, it at the same time displayed statist tendencies in espousing a centralization of identities under an Islamic umbrella.

RP came out of the parliamentary elections that were held on December 24, 1995 as the party with the plurality of the national votes (21.38%). Therefore its MPs began to occupy the plurality of seats in the parliament. After months of deliberations among the center parties, RP founded a coalition government with the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*) with RP's leader, Necmettin Erbakan, as Turkey's new Prime Minister.³⁶ RP's role as the leading party in a coalition government, rather than being in opposition, brought to the surface a dilemma that is endemic to its discourse. After ascending to power, the RP leaders found themselves in a position where they could not challenge the legitimacy of the state system in Turkey, the parameters of which were defined in the course of the early years of the Republic. Yet, RP leadership simultaneously tried to sustain its appeal in the eyes of its constituency by making an Islamic identity visible in the public realm. This has paved the way to a paradox within the party discourse. In fact, some students of RP began to refer to a conflict between the discourses of the "political RP" and "sociological RP."³⁷ In the course of its first year in government, RP leadership staggered between embracing the fundamental premises of the Republican regime, including secularism, on the one hand, and being extremely critical of it by adopting an Islamic identity, on the other. This, in turn, led to a polarization of the political climate in Turkey breeding essentialist identities such as militarist-secularist versus Islamist, and making it impossible to envision a democratic disclosure. The discourse of the RP has increasingly become more laden with motifs of the Republican epistemology, with its statist, central tendencies towards constructing an Islamic identity in a post-Kemalist medium.

³⁶ This government received a vote of confidence in the parliament on July 8, 1996.

³⁷ See, for instance, Menderes Çınar, "Postmodern Zamanların Kemalist Projesi: Türkiye'yi Refahlaştırmak," *Birlikim*, no.91 (November 1996): 32-9.

The arguments of the RP have always been based on a critique of the Kemalist modernization project. The Muslim intellectuals, on the contrary, forward a critique of modernity which goes beyond a critique of Kemalist secularization. Perhaps this is exactly the point which should be emphasized in distinguishing the Muslim intellectuals of the 1990s from their counterparts at the end of the nineteenth century. Those who opted for Islamism within the Young Ottoman thought at the end of the nineteenth century tried to reconcile Islam and Western modernity. The Muslim intellectuals in the 1990s have clearly abandoned attempts geared towards such a reconciliation. Theirs is a view of "the century through the lens of Islam rather than interpreting Islam through the lens of the modern era."³⁸

Perhaps, one of the most debated projects associated with the Muslim intellectuals in Turkey is the Medina Contract, or Medina Constitution, brought to the forefront by Ali Bulaç, who is considered one of the prominent Muslim intellectuals in Turkey. The Medina Contract was an accord between the Prophet Muḥammad and other tribes of Medina at the time of the *Asr-i Saadet* (golden age of Islam). The contract was active between the years 622 to 632. According to Bulaç, the Medina Contract is the legal documentation of a political unity.³⁹ In a series of articles that have appeared in the course of the past three years, Bulaç and many others debated the rejuvenation of the principles of the Medina Contract which made possible the livelihood of various groups with different religious convictions, secularists, and atheists in political unity.⁴⁰ The contract was based on an idea of multiple judicial systems. In the course of the debates regarding the Medina Contract, it became clear that its proponents envisaged a critique of modernity and a return to religion. Bulaç, furthermore, located a special role for Islam, since he believed that neither Judaism nor Christianity could be a frame of reference in constituting a pluralist accord.⁴¹ According to Bulaç, Islam is the religion most conducive to paving the way to a pluralist accord.

In rejuvenating arguments towards a pluralist society with multiple judicial systems, Bulaç assigns a role to the Muslim intellectuals in eliminating Western influences on intellectual life while replacing them with

³⁸ Cited in Binnaz Toprak, "Islamist Intellectuals: Revolt Against Industry and Technology," Metin Heper et al., *Turkey and the West: Images of a New Political Culture* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd. Publishers, 1993), 247-69, esp. 264.

³⁹ Ali Bulaç, "Bir arada Yaşamanın Mümkün Projesi: Medine Vesikası," *Bilgi ve Hikmet* 5 (1994): 5-16.

⁴⁰ Most of the articles appeared in the journals *Kitap*, *Birlikim*, *Bilgi ve Hikmet* between 1992-1995.

⁴¹ Ali Bulaç, "Dinlerin Meydan Okuyuşu: Entegrizm ve Fundamentalizm," *Birlikim* 37 (1992): 17-29.

Qurʾān and Sunna. In stressing this, Toprak points to an element of vanguardism in Bulaç's thought.⁴²

Michael Meeker analyzes the views of the three Muslim intellectuals, Ali Bulaç, Rasim Özdenören, and İsmet Özel.⁴³ Since it is beyond the purposes of the current study to explore Muslim intellectuals in such a detailed manner, it will be useful to point to some of their common characteristics as they appear in Toprak's and Meeker's analyses.

First of all, the new Muslim intellectuals are very much a product of the secularist Turkish Republic. Some of them have attended secular educational institutions, have command over one or two Western languages, and refer to Western historiography extensively in their writings. Second, unlike their nineteenth century predecessors, the new Muslim intellectuals do not try to reconcile Islam and modernity, but rather they are critical of the premises of modernity itself. Third, when these two characteristics are combined, the new Muslim intellectuals can be distinguished by their critique of modernity along with numerous references to Western historiography. Perhaps, it is at this point that the language of the new Muslim intellectuals seem similar to a post-modern language. Yet, it is also very different.⁴⁴ The new Muslim intellectuals seem very much trapped within the discursive and graphic practices firmly rooted in modernity. While, on the one hand, they seem to represent Islam as an alternative discourse, they resort to the discursive and graphic practices of another discourse, i.e. the modernization discourse in the Turkish context. Hence, their stance seems akin to the Westernists and secularists of the late Ottoman and early Republican period, who put the cart before the horse, i.e. who attempted to inculcate new ideas and new paradigms of thinking and behaving in an Islamic society in which the ethos of modernity had not taken root. The new Muslim intellectuals opt for the reconstitution of an Islamic way of life. In restoring Islam as an alternative discourse, they draw it into the polemical terrain of modernism.

Fethullah Gülen became well-known among the Muslim community in Turkey in the course of the 1970s as a preacher and a student of the school of *Nurculuk*, the origins of which go back to the works of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1873-1960). In the course of the past couple of years, Gülen and his community have acquired widespread media cover-

⁴² Binnaz Toprak, "Islamic Intellectuals," 259.

⁴³ Michael Meeker, "The New Muslim Intellectuals in the Republic of Turkey," ed., Richard Tapper, *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd. Publishers, n.d.), 189-219.

⁴⁴ In order to further clarify the difference of Ali Bulaç's stance from a post-modern politics of difference, see Menderes Çınar and Ayşe Kadıoğlu, "An Islamic Critique of Modernity in Turkey: Politics of Difference Backwards" (Ankara, Turkey: Bilkent University, unpublished manuscript, 1996).

age in Turkey. This is partly because of the popularity of a newspaper, *Zaman*, and a television channel that seem to have become the voice of this community's new vocation within the Turkish political structure.⁴⁵

Gülen and his community represent what could be called "moderate Islam" in the Turkish context. Gülen usually uses words like consensus, compromise, dialogue in his statements. According to him, women's head-gear and the necessity to cover certain parts of the body in Islam are more trivial issues than they have come to represent in the Turkish context. Gülen has been critical of the focus of the debates in Turkey regarding Islam around such issues. He has referred to "globalization" in his statements by which he implies a dialogue among the representatives of other world religions. Gülen does not have a world view that is situated against other world views. For instance, he does not represent an anti-United States, nor an anti-Europe position. He seems to have freed himself from such convictions of the cold war era. Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of Gülen's views has been revealed in his statements regarding Atatürk. Gülen's statements about Atatürk are full of praise for his wit, intellect, and leadership. In fact, he refers to Atatürk as a genius. Not surprisingly, Gülen's views about Atatürk have attracted a great deal of popularity in a country that has been divided into a secularist and an Islamic camp in the course of the past decade and a half. While the latter have begun to march in the streets in Islamic attire, the former have been busy commercializing the image of Atatürk. Atatürk pins, necklaces, bumper stickers. . . etc., have become quite widespread in Turkey in the 1990s. In a country divided around the cult of a personality, with Atatürk bashers on the one side, and Atatürk lovers on the other, when a well-known Islamic preacher calls him a genius, this evidently earns him a lot of popularity.

Gülen opts for combining religious and modern education. His supporters have established hundreds of schools in Turkey and in countries like the United States, Albania, Georgia, and Moldavia towards that end. He has questioned the West's exclusive rights over modernity. He has opened up a debate about the possibility of an Islamic Enlightenment. While he is open to the science and technology of the West, he also represents the emotionalism of the East.⁴⁶ As Can Kozanoğlu puts it, in the current climate of a "cultural open buffet" in Turkey, Gülen's plate is full of various dishes, i.e., identities, some of which do not go well together.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Zaman* has recently published a series of interviews with Fethullah Gülen. Eyüp Can, "Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi ile Ufuk Turu," *Zaman*, August 13-23, 1995. Those interviews and their evaluations by Turkish academics, and intellectuals, which appeared in the newspapers *Zaman* and *Cumhuriyet*, constitute the basis of this study's evaluations regarding Fethullah Gülen and his community.

⁴⁶ Fethullah Gülen is famous for crying while preaching.

⁴⁷ Can Kozanoğlu, "Düzenle Uyumlu, Aldatıcı Şeffaflık," *Cumhuriyet*, August 24, 1995.

These are Westernism, localism, Easternism, secularism, Islamism, modernism, nationalism and Turkism.

It is possible to view the embracing of such multiple identities as a sign of a pragmatism on Gülen's part. In fact, many analyses, referring to the statist and militarist themes in his discourse, see him and his community as a pragmatist group which gives the economic and political elite in Turkey an Islamic identity. Gülen's statements are filled with praises for the state and especially for the military. He does not condone rebellion against such authorities.⁴⁸ He preaches obedience.

It is not surprising that Gülen's ideas have been embraced by various, sometimes opposing camps in Turkey. This is because he has something for each one of them on his big plate which he filled from the cultural open buffet. Fethullah Gülen is one of the latest and most popular modern Muslims that Republican Turkey has produced. Interestingly, RP leadership is the most outspoken critic of Gülen's views.⁴⁹

While RP is busy reducing tradition to Islam in its adamant critique of modernization in the Turkish context, Gülen opens up new avenues for the future in pointing to a cultural continuity with a past that involves elements other than Islam. Yet, while espousing cultural continuity, Gülen is paradoxically embracing a centralized, militarist state tradition. It is at this point that his views are haunted by a dilemma. It does not seem possible to restore a cultural continuity with the past while simultaneously embracing a Republican state tradition since it is the latter that had made the former impossible. In other words, it was the Republican, centralized, state tradition which prompted a rupture from the Ottoman past with its Islamic and other features. Yet, despite all such paradoxes that it contains, it looks like Gülen and his community, with all their pragmatism and mystic features, will continue to garner further interest in Turkey from various groups.

⁴⁸ At this point, his views display a continuity with Bediüzzaman Said Nursi who was critical of the 1925 Şeyh Sait rebellion. See Çakır, *Ayet ve Slogan*, 80.

⁴⁹ See İsmail Nacar's views, for instance in *Cumhuriyet*, İsmail Nacar, "Durmadan Ağlayan Adam," *Cumhuriyet* (August 22, 1995). Nacar argues that Fethullah Gülen's "small world" (the title of Fethullah Gülen's book, *Küçük Dünyam*—My Small World) is not so small, since he claims that he comes from the Prophet's family. Nacar is also critical of Gülen's statements which imply a special mystical status for himself, such as the story about not being stung by insects, the destruction of his neighbors garden by a heavy rain once when none of the surrounding gardens were hit (that neighbor had hit and crippled some of Gülen's family's animals implying that he was penalized by an high authority). etc. It is true that Gülen has carved out a special status for himself by such statements involving some extraordinary/mystic incidents. But, what is more interesting is how such statements are portrayed as ridiculous by an Islamic political party. Nacar believes that Gülen is serving the interests of the True Path Party and is giving it an Islamic flavor. This, in turn, is against the interests of the RP that had a monopoly over Islamic motifs within a political party structure.

Conclusions

Ottoman encounters with the West were such that they prompted the emergence of dual structures within Tanzimat thought. While trying to preserve a decadent empire, Ottoman statesmen at the turn of the nineteenth century embraced the idea of progress and Westernism. The idea of Westernism involved the positioning of the Ottoman Self in reference to a privileged Other, i.e. the West. While the nationalist ideologies were accompanying the transition to modern politics in the West, with nation-states as the main actors, this was inciting the Ottoman intellectuals to construct new, modern identities for themselves. The efforts of the Republican elite were geared towards a much more pronounced Westernization project. The Republican elite, whose ideas were laden with positivist motifs, launched a modernization project from above. The modern idea of progress became an end for them, rather than a means for preserving the state. They believed that Islam, and the traditional culture that it nurtured, was the main cause of the backwardness and problems of the empire. Hence, they adopted a view of order for the sake of progress, as opposed to the Tanzimat statesmen who gave in to progress for the sake of order, for preserving a decadent empire. This urged the Republican elite to adopt a policy of secularization which was largely teleological, and perhaps somewhat theological.

In the course of this process of modernization tailored within the Turkish context, it is possible to observe an epistemology based on essentialism and social engineering. It is obvious that all modern entities have elements of constructedness in them. Yet, what distinguishes the modernization context is an attempt to sever links with the past. This instilled a state of amnesia in Republican Turkey. The Republican epistemology embodied vanguardism, elitism, statism, managerialism, and militarism.

The Young Ottomans who were educated in modern, Western institutions were interested in placing some limits to modernization at the end of the nineteenth century. Since the Tanzimat statesmen had already put the cart before the horse by starting a series of institutional reforms in a society in which the ethos of modernity had not taken root, the intellectuals had taken upon themselves the responsibility to cultivate that ethos in an Islamic society. By portraying modest-yet-modern fictional characters in their novels, the men of letters of the Tanzimat era tried to construct a modern identity laden with Islamic motifs. The vanguardism of the Tanzimat statesmen as well as the cultural elites of the period was accentuated during the Republican years. The vanguardism of the cultural elite at the end of the nineteenth century was personified in the fate of Beşir Fuad, a prominent novelist, who committed suicide in 1887 and took notes while he died in order to contribute to the zeal of the novelists of his time,

i.e. the conception of the modern, experimental novel.⁵⁰ The Republican elite continued the trend of putting the cart before the horse that had begun with the Tanzimat reforms. They tried to inculcate the birth of modern institutions before the emergence of modern ideas which demanded them. Perhaps, it is possible to point to a similarity between the fates of Beşir Fuad and the Turkish Republican elite, since they both cultivated the seeds of their own finale by their altruistic positivism.

Islamic discourses of the 1990s display various characteristics. This fact reveals analyses which refer to the threat of a monolithic Islamic fundamentalism to be rather artificial. The three Islamic groups and their discourses portrayed above reveal an increasing significance of modern elements in them. All of these currents seem to have received their share of the Republican epistemology.

Islamic discourses in the 1990s in Turkey have clearly prompted debates on identity. They have challenged the foundations of a monolithic, absolute, official Republican Turkish identity. Nevertheless, their analyses did not urge a shift of focus from identities to differences, unities to fragmentations, and presences to absences. Islamic discourses are cultivating post-modern themes within a modernist context. This, in turn, is paving the way towards an explosion of identities in Turkey expressed in modern concepts such as ethnicity, culture, nation, religion, and tradition. The predominance of the key features of the Republican epistemology such as essentialism and managerialism seems to obstruct possibilities for a democratic disclosure in Turkey. Could it be that, in their current state, the Islamic discourses which bring the question of identity to the forefront in Turkey are putting the cart before the horse since they raise the question of identity in a modern context prior to an epistemological transformation?

*Bilkent University
Ankara, Turkey*

AYŞE KADIOĞLU



⁵⁰ See, Jale Parla on putting the cart before the horse in the Tanzimat novel. Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990).

IN SEARCH OF "REVOLUTIONARY ISLAM:" THE CASE OF ṬĀLEQĀNĪ AND THE MOJĀHEDĪN

Āyatollāh Ṭāleqānī and the Mojāhedīn Organization have both played a decisive role in the formulation and propagation of "revolutionary Islam" in Iran, as well as in the actualization of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Despite the differences in their educational backgrounds, generations, and revolutionary professionalism, Ṭāleqānī and the Mojāhedīn shared a common concern: formulation and propagation of "revolutionary Islam," a dynamic ideology that would inspire the Iranian people to rise up and replace the unpopular regime of the Shāh with an Islamic government. The following is a brief presentation of the life of Ṭāleqānī and the history of the Mojāhedīn Organization from a historical perspective, focusing on their respective attempts to formulate and advocate such a militant ideology. It includes a section on the Mojāhedīn's ideology, as it is the actual fruition of these attempts. The study concludes with a brief look at the points of convergence between the two, in an effort to throw some light on the nature of the connection and relationship between these two important forces in modern Iranian history.

Āyatollāh Ṭāleqānī¹

Āyatollāh Seyyed Maḥmūd Ṭāleqānī's life is a tale of constant struggle against injustice and oppression.² He was born in 1910 in Gīlyārd,³ a

¹ An extended and somewhat different version of this section has been published earlier under the title "Āyatullāh Ṭāleqānī's contribution to the Revolutionary Struggle of the Iranian People," in *Hamdard Islamicus*, 17, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 35-54. Here, however, the material has been revised and supplemented with new information relevant to the focus of this study.

² The only detailed biography and comprehensive work on Ṭāleqānī is an as yet unpublished Master's thesis. See Akhtar Naraghi, "Taleghani (Ṭāleqānī): His life long struggle during the Pahlavi regime, his interpretation of jīḥād in Islam, and his leading role in the 1979 revolution of Iran," M.A. Thesis (Montreal: McGill University, 1983). The two major works on Ṭāleqānī available in Persian and which Naraghi has used extensively in her own study are Bahram-e Afrāsiyābi and Sa'īd Dehqān, *Ṭāleqānī va tārīkh* (Tehran, 1980), and Eskandar-e Deldam, *Ṭāleqānī. Rīḥat yā shahādāt* (Tehran, 1980). Unfortunately these latter works were not available to me, therefore, I have had to rely primarily on Naraghi's work. For a concise but more systematic treatment of Ṭāleqānī's thought, see Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent, the Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York, 1993), 216-73. Dabashi has apparently been unaware of Naraghi's work, since he not only mentions that there is no biography of Ṭāleqānī available, but he also refers to Hamid Algar's "Introduction," in R. Campbell, trans., *Society and Economics in Islam* (Berkeley, 1982)], for Ṭāleqānī's biography in English.

³ Whereas there is an almost unanimous consensus about Ṭāleqānī's birth date, citing it somewhere between 1910 and 1911, there seems to be a certain degree of confusion in regard to

small village in the district of Ṭāleqān, located in the North West of Tehran. His ancestors were all Shīʿī religious figures whose genealogy is traced back to Imām Moḥammad Bāqer, the fifth Shīʿī Imām⁴. His father, Seyyed Abū al-Ḥasan, was a simple clergyman with a long standing history of opposition to the rule of Reżā Shāh.

Ṭāleqānī attended the traditional primary school of his village, and when his family moved to Tehran in 1917, he continued his studies at the Mollā Reżā School.⁵ In 1920 Ṭāleqānī moved to Qom, where he studied Islamic religious sciences at the Feyziyeh seminary, with a particular interest in logic, philosophy, and the interpretation of the Qurʾān.⁶

In 1926 Ṭāleqānī went to Najaf to continue his studies. There he was eventually granted permission by Āyatollāh Eḡfāhānī to teach jurisprudence.⁷ According to Naraghi,

Later in Tehran [Ṭāleqānī] received a second license in jurisprudence from Āyatullāh Ḥāʿiri. . . . Also he received a license as an authority in *ḥadīth* from Āyatullāh Marʿashī.⁸

At this stage of Ṭāleqānī's life a crucial event took place which provides an important insight for understanding Ṭāleqānī's militancy. A meeting with one of his teachers, Āyatollāh Moḥammad Taqī Yazdī, turned out to be a shocking encounter and created such a strong impression on Ṭāleqānī that its reverberations were felt for the rest of his life. Algar has narrated the story as follows:

the exact name of his place of birth. Yann Richard is the first scholar to have introduced Ṭāleqānī to Western audiences. He vaguely refers to Ṭāleqānī's birth place as being "in the valley of Taleqan" [see his "Contemporary Shīʿī thought," in Nikki Keddie, ed., *Roots of Revolution* (New Haven and London, 1981), 210. Next is Hamid Algar who has asserted that Ṭāleqānī was born in "the village of Gelird in the Taliqan district" (see Algar, "Introduction," 9). Irfani follows by arguing that Ṭāleqānī was born "in the Karaj district near Tehran" [see Suroosh Irfani, *Revolutionary Islam in Iran, Popular Liberation or Religious Dictatorship?* (London, 1983), 139]. Naraghi has clarified the issue by stating that Ṭāleqānī was born in the village of Gilyārd in the district of Ṭāleqān (Naraghi, "Taleghani," 5). Meanwhile Jabbari refers to Ṭāleqānī's birth place as "The village of Golyard near the town of Taleqan" [see Ahmad Jabbari and Farhang Rajaei (trs.), *Islam and Ownership* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1983), X]. Dabashi, on the other hand, only mentions that Ṭāleqānī "was born to a devout religious family," and does not mention where he was born (Dabashi, 217). Surprisingly, even a work published in Iran incorrectly describes Ṭāleqānī's village as "Golyazd," [see Eḡskandar-e Deldam, *Zendeḡi va mobārezāt-e Pedar Ṭāleqānī* (Tehran, 1979), 17]. Thus the confusion has continued. It should be noted, however, that Naraghi is right and the correct name of the village is Gilyārd, since in the summer of 1979, during a short visit to Iran, I had the opportunity to visit Ṭāleqānī's birth place and ascertain its name.

⁴ Naraghi, "Taleghani," 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

Arrested for political activity hostile to Riza Shāh, [Yazdī] was assigned to forced residence at the shrine city of Shāh 'Abd al-'Azim, just to the south of Tehran. Ayatullah Taleqani went to visit him there, and Yazdi showed his pupil the marks left on his body by the whippings he had endured in prison. He implored [Ṭāleqānī] to devote his life to awakening the religious institution and directing its energies to the service of the nation. The whole of Taleqani's subsequent career may be taken as a determined response to this plea of Ayatullah Yazdi.⁹

It is thus in the combined influence of the elder Ṭāleqānī and Āyatollāh Yazdī that the key to Ṭāleqānī's militancy could be found.

In 1932 Ṭāleqānī moved permanently to Tehran and soon started a series of classes where he taught Qur'anic exegesis to young intellectuals who were interested in learning Islam's teachings on social issues.¹⁰ In 1936 he was imprisoned for three months for wearing a turban without carrying the proper license for it. Ṭāleqānī's stay in prison affected him deeply, and as a reaction, his thoughts and reflections became more introverted. Years later Ṭāleqānī explained this experience which had served as a turning-point in his life. He wrote,

contradictions [in words and deeds] of some religious leaders, this dark environment, and this psychological pressure obliged me to go deeper in my studies of the Qur'ān and the *Nahj al-Balāghah*,¹¹ the history and active lives of the Prophet and the Imāms. Acquaintance with some other *'ulamā'* gradually enlightened my mind concerning the roots and meanings of religion. The goal then became clear, and I realized my social duty. . . the goal is not just praying. The invitation of the Prophet had a basis in thought and action and advocated will, thought, and action in removing any resistance and obstacle.¹²

Consequently Ṭāleqānī started to attract a small group of young and enthusiastic students who were dissatisfied with the apolitical interpretations of the Qur'ān offered by traditional *'ulamā'*. These students were thus a suitable audience for Ṭāleqānī, who argued that "the Qur'ān must be interpreted in the light of the existing conditions and the realities of life rather than abstractly."¹³

⁹ Algar, "Introduction," 10.

¹⁰ Naraghi, "Taleghani," 11.

¹¹ *Nahj al-balāghah* (*Nahj al-balāghah* in Persian) is a collection of sayings and sermons attributed to 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib and highly revered by Shī'ī Muslims. Its importance, for Shī'ī Muslims, is superseded only by the Qur'ān.

¹² As quoted by Naraghi, "Taleghani," 16, from Afrāsiyābī and Dehqān, *Ṭāleqānī*, 49-51.

¹³ Naraghi, "Taleghani," 18.

The coming to power of Moḥammad Reżā Shāh, as a result of his father's abdication in 1941 under Allied pressure, resulted in a more favorable atmosphere for political activity. Having noticed the favorable conditions of the time, Ṭāleqānī increased his activities; he gave lectures at different religious centers, published articles in their publications, and organized charity funds.¹⁴

The growing influence of the Tūdeh Party concerned Ṭāleqānī, who saw a connection between its growth and the people's dissatisfaction with the conservative clergy.¹⁵ To counter this, Ṭāleqānī intensified his propagation of Islam as a viable alternative to both what he understood to be static and backward presentations of Islam and to the alien, but attractive teachings of Marxism. In 1941 Ṭāleqānī established a religious organization by the name of Kānūn-e Islāmī (The Islamic Center), where he gave lectures, organized discussion sessions, and published a journal called *Dānesh āmuz* with the help of Mehdi Bāzargān and Dr. Saḥābī, who were both university professors.¹⁶

The following years saw Ṭāleqānī's increased involvement in religious-political affairs. He taught in the Sepahsālār Madrasah, led the public prayer in the Hedāyat Mosque where he also gave lectures and taught the Qur'ān, continued writing articles in different journals, and gave weekly lectures on Islamic themes over the radio.¹⁷ He also became more active in the affairs of the National Front, and although he did not become a member of that organization, Ṭāleqānī did his best to muster support for Moṣaddeq. When the power struggle between the religious faction of the National Front headed by Āyatollāh Kāshānī, and the secular faction led by Moṣaddeq, broke out, Ṭāleqānī sided with Moṣaddeq.¹⁸ Ṭāleqānī's decision was based on the idea that support of Moṣaddeq meant supporting the cause of the people.

After the 1953 C.I.A.-Royalist coup and the atmosphere of political repression which followed it, Moṣaddeq was exiled and his followers were brutally suppressed. Ṭāleqānī, however, did not decrease his activities and instead used Hedāyat Mosque as headquarters for the opposition leaders who were trying to keep up the fight by establishing the National Resistance Movement.¹⁹ He gave shelter to a number of political figures who were being persecuted by the government, including Navvāb-e Ṣafavī, the leader of the 'fundamentalist' Fadā'iyān-e Islām.²⁰

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Along with these activities, Ṭāleqānī became involved in international affairs. Naraghi describes these activities as follows:

In 1338 (1959) and 1340 (1961) Ṭāleqānī took part in the World Muslim Congress in Jerusalem which was a part of Jordan at that time. Later he participated in the Islamic conferences of Dār-al-Taqrīb-i Islām in Cairo.²¹

He also travelled to Pakistan to attend the conference of Shu'ūb al-Muslimīn.²² These travels resulted in a deep respect for Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir and a strong sense of sympathy for the Palestinian people.²³

In 1961 Ṭāleqānī, along with Mehdī Bāzargān and Dr. Saḥābī, formed *Nehzat-e Āzādī* (the Liberation Movement). In the same year a peaceful demonstration organized by the Second National Front turned into a confrontation with the police and resulted in the arrests of a large number of people. Ṭāleqānī volunteered to be taken into custody along with the others, despite the reluctance of the police to arrest him.²⁴ Consequently he was detained, but released soon after.

Discomfited with the implications of the open political atmosphere pushed by John F. Kennedy, the Shāh paid a visit to the United States in April 1962 and asked Kennedy's permission to alter the situation on the condition that the Shāh himself would be in charge of the reforms which Kennedy wanted to implement in Iran. Upon Kennedy's agreement, the Shāh dismissed Prime Minister 'Alī Amīnī and ordered new security measures in order to put an end to the era of political freedom. Consequently, "the Freedom Front [Liberation Movement] and the National Front ceased to exist legally."²⁵

Meanwhile the Shāh was preparing for a referendum on his White Revolution, and as a precautionary measure he put the leaders of the National Front and the Liberation Movement under arrest. Ṭāleqānī spent over four months in jail, but eventually was released.²⁶ After the proposed referendum was carried out and the Shāh's reform plan was 'approved' by the people, the 'ulamā' voiced their criticism of it, and Khomeinī in particular launched a bitter campaign against the government, which resulted in the June Uprising of 1963. On 7 June 1963, however, after three days of bloody confrontations, the uprising was defeated and Khomeinī exiled. Ṭāleqānī went into hiding, but kept sending communi-

²¹ *Ibid.*, 60-1.

²² *Ibid.*, 59.

²³ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁴ The Āyatollāh Ṭāleqānī Cultural Foundation, *Yādnamēh-e Abūzar-e Zamān* (Tehran, 1981), xiv.

²⁵ Naraghi, "Taleghani," 66.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

ques to the people to keep up their morale. He was eventually arrested and put on trial on several charges of anti-government activities, including a charge of plotting to blow up the Sa'd Ābād palace,²⁷ and was consequently sentenced to ten years of imprisonment.

In prison Ṭāleqānī taught and discussed the interpretation of *Nahj al-balāghah* and the Qur'ān, and wrote the first of his five-volume commentary on the Qur'ān known as *Parto-vī az Qur'ān* (*A Ray from the Qur'ān*).²⁸ In 1968 Ṭāleqānī was released along with Bāzargān and a few other political prisoners,²⁹ due to "an international campaign of pressure on the Shāh's regime."³⁰ He immediately went to the Hedāyat Mosque and resumed his former activities. He also continued writing his Qur'anic exegesis, and studied philosophy as well as works on contemporary political issues including works by Sayyid Quṭb, Mao Tse-tung, and Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir.³¹

Meanwhile the suppression of the June Uprising served to radicalize the opposition movement, and consequently a new generation of revolutionaries entered the political scene. These young revolutionaries came from varied socio-economic and intellectual backgrounds, but had one thing in common; they all believed that armed struggle was the only relevant form of political activity under a dictatorial regime. Thus several clandestine organizations were formed, all of which advocated a full-fledged armed struggle against the Shāh. The two prominent organizations of the era were the People's Mojāhedīn Organization of Iran, simply called the Mojāhedīn, and the Organization of People's Fadā'iyān Guerrillas, better known as the Fadā'iyān. The latter group advocated a Marxist-Leninist ideology, whereas the former formulated its own version of Islam with great emphasis on jihād and martyrdom. Thus it was inevitable and almost destined for Ṭāleqānī to establish a rapport with the Mojāhedīn since he shared their views on *jihād* and martyrdom.³²

There was still another factor that encouraged Ṭāleqānī's cooperation with the Mojāhedīn. This factor, according to Naraghi, was Ṭāleqānī's realization of the necessity of an organization:

Being aware of the limitations of the means to reach out to more people and considering the possibility that at any time the regime might deprive him of the use of the mosque as a tool to advocate his cause, Ṭāleqānī began to think more in terms of organization and a

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

³⁰ Algar, "Introduction," 13.

³¹ Naraghi, "Taleghani," 75.

³² For more information concerning Ṭāleqānī's views on *jihād* and martyrdom, see Mehdi Abedi and Gary Legenhausen (eds.), *Jihad and Shahadat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam* (Houston, 1986).

systematic approach as a means to propagate the Qur'anic message of the necessity to confront the Pharaoh of the time. . . .³³

The most immediate reason for Ṭāleqānī's closeness to the Mojāhedīn, however, had to do with the fact that all three of its founders were members of Ṭāleqānī's Liberation Movement. So even though "Ṭāliqānī welcomed meetings with the leaders and founders of [different] revolutionary organizations"³⁴ with diverse ideological tendencies, his relationship with the Mojāhedīn became particularly intimate.

Meanwhile Ṭāleqānī sought the support and cooperation of the older leaders of the opposition as well; hence he

. . . intensified his secret ties with other revolutionary leaders either in hiding within Iran or in exile including Āyatullāh Khumaynī, who was in exile in Najaf, Iraq.³⁵

In 1969 Ṭāleqānī took another radical step, this time in support of the Palestinian people. As part of his campaign against the Shāh and his support for Israel's suppression of the Palestinians, Ṭāleqānī demanded that his audience in the Hedāyat Mosque donate the *zakāt al-fīṭr* payments to the Palestinian people and he himself volunteered to deliver this money to the Palestinians.³⁶

In 1971 the Shāh, who was planning to celebrate the 2500th anniversary of the establishment of the Persian Kingdom, ordered an intense and systematic campaign against the opposition to avoid any possible disturbance of this heavily advertised celebration. As part of this campaign Ṭāleqānī was banned from preaching in the mosque during the month of Ramaḍān. Ṭāleqānī's audience, however, responded by going to his house to listen to his sermons. The government then decided to exile him to Zāhedān, a remote city in the Eastern part of Iran,³⁷ and later on to Bāft, a small city in the province of Kermān.³⁸

After a year of exile in Bāft, Ṭāleqānī was permitted to return to Tehran. Upon his arrival at the Hedāyat Mosque, Ṭāleqānī realized that the government had assigned its leadership to an "official mullā." He also learned that the political atmosphere was extremely discouraging. This development brought Ṭāleqānī closer to the Mojāhedīn, and he became actively involved in their affairs. According to Afrāsiyābī,

³³ Naraghi, "Taleghani," 162.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

³⁶ The Āyatollāh Ṭāleqānī Cultural Foundation, 183.

³⁷ Naraghi, "Taleghani," 170.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 171.

He was in direct contact with the Mujāhidīn; he encouraged the merchants of the Bāzār of Tehran to contribute financial assistance for the fighters, and the families of the martyrs who had lost their sole source of support. Ṭāliqānī accepted the responsibility of organizing and administering these activities. Also, Ṭāliqānī asked for the support of the 'ulamā' for the Mujāhidīn and the cause of their martyrs.³⁹

In 1975 Ṭāleqānī's connection with the Mojāhedīn was revealed to the Shāh's secret police (SAVAK) by Vahīd Afrākhteh.⁴⁰ Afrākhteh, who was one of the two members of the central committee of the Mojāhedīn who had opted to change Mojāhedīn's ideology to Marxism, revealed this information during a torture session and, consequently, Ṭāleqānī was arrested, tried and sentenced to ten years in prison. In prison Ṭāleqānī developed stronger ties with the political prisoners and advocated unity among all opposition forces inside and outside of prison. His courage and sincerity and his discerning attitude enabled him to enjoy the respect of all political prisoners irrespective of their ideological leanings. Ṭāleqānī's reconciliatory role in this period was extremely important in countering an antagonistic attitude that had started to prevail among the political prisoners. Embittered by the confusion caused by the then recent split in the Mojāhedīn organization and the fact that the dominant leaders had declared the Mojāhedīn to be a Marxist organization despite the resistance of its Muslim members, many people turned against Marxists and Marxism. Some of the 'ulamā' declared the Marxists to be religiously impure and prohibited the Muslim prisoners from cooperating with them even in regard to the daily chores of the prison where they all lived together. The leftist political prisoners, in turn, regarded this behaviour as reactionary and accused the Muslims of being backward and narrow-minded.

It was in this atmosphere that Ṭāleqānī preached the unity of all revolutionaries against the common enemy. He actively participated in the discussion sessions held by the council which oversaw the affairs of the political prisoners, and he cooperated with the Marxists despite the disagreement of his fellow clergymen. Along with this, Ṭāleqānī continued to instruct prisoners on the Qur'ān and *Nahj al-balāghah*, which was warmly received and appreciated.

On 30 October 1978, as a result of the mounting unrest which had swept the major cities of Iran for many months and in reply to a popular demand for the release of political prisoners, Ṭāleqānī was released from captivity. Upon his release Ṭāleqānī addressed a welcoming crowd of

³⁹ As quoted *ibid.*, 172-73, from Afrāsiyābī and Dehqān, *Ṭāleqānī*, 318.

⁴⁰ Algar, "Introduction," 14. Irfani gives the name as Ramān Afrākhteh which is incorrect (Irfani, *Revolutionary Islam*, 138).

thousands of people in a speech that emphasized unity as the key element for the success of the struggle. He said:

I invite all the forces of the nation of Iran, . . . to unite against the schemes of alien elements and protectors of oppression. I invite all factions of opposition to this unity. We must think of our unity, of oneness, and of thinking alike, and avoid past mistakes.⁴¹

Ṭāleqānī's reputation as a knowledgeable, competent and revolutionary clergyman made him overnight the leader of the Revolution inside of Iran, while Khomeinī gave directions to people from abroad. Without the brilliant cooperation of Ṭāleqānī at this stage, the success of the Revolution seems highly questionable. It was Ṭāleqānī who enjoyed the respect and support of the religious masses as well as that of the nationalists in the National Front, of modernist and secular intellectuals such as Bāzargān and Dr. Saḥābī in the Liberation Movement, and of urban-guerrilla organizations such as the Mojāhedīn and Fadā'iyān. Ṭāleqānī's office became the headquarters of revolutionary activities, where he united and harmonized the efforts of different people and organizations on one hand, and linked them to the activities of Khomeinī on the other hand.

The most significant single act of Ṭāleqānī's revolutionary career is undoubtedly his call to the mass demonstration known as the *Tāsū'ā* March and his remarkable leadership of it.⁴² Despite the imposition of martial law by General Azhārī's military government and the subsequent positioning of the army in the streets and the rumours of its readiness to crush any demonstration, and despite direct and indirect death threats against Ṭāleqānī himself,⁴³ he issued his invitation for the great march on 10 December 1978, by announcing:

I will begin the rally from my home on Sunday, *Tāsū'ā*, which happens to fall on the day of Human Rights which is recognized worldwide. At 9:00 a.m. I will begin the rally. . . .⁴⁴

⁴¹ As quoted by Naraghi, "Taleghani," 172-73, from Afrāsiyābi and Dehqān, *Ṭāleqānī*, 183.

⁴² *Tāsū'ā* is the ninth day of the month of Muḥarram. In this month, Twelver Shī'ī Muslims mourn the martyrdom of their third Imām, Ḥusayn, who was slain on the tenth day of Muarram in 680 C.E. Preceding the day of the actual slaying of Ḥusayn and his companions, *Tāsū'ā* is regarded as a significant day of preparation for martyrdom. Ṭāleqānī showed his great leadership ability by choosing this day for the proposed march, which symbolized his readiness for martyrdom, and which was also the best possible day to utilize the heightened religious sentiment of the people. The day had another significant aspect in that it was the International Day of Human Rights and thus was an important challenge to the claim of the advocacy of Human Rights which was championed by then President Jimmy Carter.

⁴³ Hāj Valiollāh Cheh-pūr, a close associate of Ṭāleqānī, has narrated one of the plots of the Shah's secret police (SAVAK) to crush Ṭāleqānī after the prayer at the end of the march, and how it was foiled. For the complete story see his interview with *Aeyhān*, reproduced entirely in Deldam, *Riḥlat*, 85-86.

⁴⁴ As quoted by Naraghi, "Taleghani," 190, from Afrāsiyābi and Dehqān, *Ṭāleqānī*, 361.

Meanwhile a new development overshadowed the unity of the participants and threatened its success; "a number of conservative clergymen who feared massive massacre by the Shāh's army, opposed the holding of the demonstration under martial law."⁴⁵ Consequently a state of confusion was created and a disturbing sense of disillusion prevailed. Ṭāleqānī, however, did not lose heart and moved quickly to regain control of the situation. Sensing the ripeness of the moment, Ṭāleqānī pressed on by defying martial law and reiterating his call for the march.

Three million people responded to his call and Ṭāleqānī triumphantly led the march from his house to Freedom Square in what was seen by all political observers around the world to be a public referendum to say farewell to the Shāh. It was at the end of this historic march that the participants openly "ratified a twelve-point declaration calling for the establishment of an Islamic government under the leadership of Imam Khomeinī."⁴⁶ A few days later the Shāh fled the country at the advice of the Carter administration, and the success of the Revolution became imminent. Soon after, Khomeinī returned to Iran, and on 11 February 1979, following three days of armed confrontation with the remnants of the Shāh's secret police, army, and Royal Guard, the Monarchy was overthrown and the Revolution came to fruition.

However, the initial enthusiasm of the Revolution's success was soon to be replaced by the emergence of new problems. Once again the unity that had made the revolution possible was in danger. The "fundamentalist" clergy quickly organized itself in order to monopolize the gains of the Revolution and to push aside all the other factions. In Kurdistan a civil war broke out sparked by the Kurds' desire for some form of autonomy. In the south, the oil-rich province of Khūzestān was the scene of bloody clashes between the army and separatist Arab-Iranians. In Tehran and other major cities, the meetings of the Mojāhedīn and other political organizations were constantly attacked by mobs claiming to be supporters of Khomeinī. Moreover, in most major cities the Royalists continuously ambushed and killed the young militants who patrolled the streets in the absence of a capable police force, and there were rumours of an army-led coup which was supposedly on its way.

These problems, combined with the enormous task of the reorganization of society, posed a serious challenge both for the provisional government and for Ṭāleqānī. He travelled to Kordestan and was successful in implementing a cease-fire in the city of Sanandaj. He sent special envoys

⁴⁵ Irfani, 142.

⁴⁶ Algar, "Introduction," 15.

to different regions where ethnic unrest threatened the integrity of the country.

During the immediate months after the revolution, Ṭāleqānī's name became synonymous with reconciliation. He launched a tremendous campaign to bring together all the disparate forces in society and also to coax back an increasing number of people who were becoming disenchanted with the Revolution.⁴⁷

Meanwhile Ṭāleqānī continued to educate people religiously and politically through his numerous lectures. Acting on the basis of Ṭāleqānī's suggestion, Khomeinī announced the commencement of Friday prayers⁴⁸ in Iran; this was the first time in the history of Shī'ism that such prayers were held,⁴⁹ and Ṭāleqānī was appointed to lead them in the capital. Shortly afterwards Ṭāleqānī started a program of Qur'anic interpretation which was televised live and immediately gained popularity.

During the elections for the Assembly of Experts, which was to draft the constitution of the Islamic Republic, Ṭāleqānī's popularity became even more evident when he received the highest number of votes. Ṭāleqānī was also chosen to head the Revolutionary Council which was in charge of running the affairs of the country. Despite this enormous popularity, Ṭāleqānī found himself increasingly isolated among the clergy, especially within the Revolutionary Council and in the Assembly of Experts, as he stood firm against the notion of one-man rule and insisted on the creation of popular consultation councils. He drafted a systematic plan for the establishment of these popular councils on all levels of society⁵⁰ which were to function on the basis of consultation, yet he found no support from the government in implementing such a plan.

On 9 September 1979, on the occasion of a commemoration of the martyrs of the Islamic Revolution, Ṭāleqānī visited Tehran's central cemetery, where most of the martyrs are buried, and delivered a historic speech in which he criticized the newcomers-to-power and restated his belief in consultative councils. He concluded by warning against a religious dictatorship and by attempting to guide his opponents towards the right course of action. He cautioned,

⁴⁷ This aspect of Ṭāleqānī's work is significant enough to merit an independent study in its own right. Due to the limited scope of the present study, however, we are obliged to mention it only in passing.

⁴⁸ The Āyatollah Ṭāleqānī Cultural Foundation, XXVI and XXVII.

⁴⁹ 'Aqīq-e Bakhshāyeshī, *Āyatollah Ṭāleqānī, mard-e celm va mobāreseh va shahādat* (*Āyatollah Ṭāleqānī, the man of knowledge, struggle, and martyrdom*) (Qom, n.d.), 5.

⁵⁰ For a reprint of the entire text of this document see Sāzmān-e Mojāhedīn-e Khalq, *Majm'eh goftār-e Pedar Ṭāleqānī* (*The Collected Lectures of Father Ṭāleqānī*) (Tehran, 1979), Section 2, 143-46.

I hope that we all become aware, each and everyone of us accept responsibility, and implement these great Islamic issues. [I hope we all] put aside obstinacy and selfishness, put aside sectarianism, opportunism, imposition of one's opinion, or God-forbidden tyranny under the guise of religion, and come join our voices to those of the masses, the afflicted, and the deprived.⁵¹

The following day, Ṭāleqānī died of a heart attack and left the Iranian people deprived of the much-needed wisdom of this man of God who believed that devotion to God meant sincere service to the people. Ṭāleqānī's understanding of the relationship between religious conviction and social action is best summarized in his last speech, where he stated,

That which is the path of God and which disconnects man from the earth and connects him to the heavens and puts him at the level of angels is jihād in the path of God. The path of the people [the masses] and the path of God are the same. The path of the people is the path of God.⁵²

This idea was clearly echoed in the teachings of the Mojāhedīn, whose lectures and publications start with the motto:

In the Name of God
and
In the Name of the Heroic People of Iran.

People's Mojāhedīn Organization of Iran⁵³

One of the most successful political organizations that was formed in the aftermath of the brutal suppression of the June Uprising is the People's Mojāhedīn Organization of Iran, known commonly as Mojāhedīn-e Khalq or simply Mojāhedīn.⁵⁴ The organization was founded in 1965 by three young engineers by the names of Sa'īd Mosen, Moḥammad-e Ḥanīf Nezhād, and 'Alī Aṣghar-e Badī'zādegān, all members of Ṭāleqānī's Liberation Movement. The founders and the early members of the Mojāhedīn were young revolutionaries who formulated their own version of militant Islam. In this effort they were influenced by the two distinct ideologies of their time: Islam and Marxism.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Section 1, 55.

⁵² *Ibid.*, Section 1, 48.

⁵³ The material for this section—unless otherwise stated—is drawn from my notes compiled while attending public lectures offered by members of the Mojāhedīn organization and its affiliated organizations in the United States during the years 1979-1983, as well as from private conversations with them.

⁵⁴ For the only comprehensive and detailed work on the Mojāhedīn see Ervand Abrahamian, *The Iranian Mojāhedīn* (New Haven and London, 1989). Unfortunately, this otherwise insightful piece of scholarship does not always remain within the confines of scholarly objectivity.

While these young men all came from religious families and themselves were Muslims, they were strongly impressed by Marxism as the ideology of revolution in the Soviet Union, Cuba, China, Vietnam and Latin America. It was in the works of Karl Marx that they discovered a systematic analysis of the notion of capital, surplus value, exploitation, revolution, and so on.⁵⁵ It was Lenin who gave them a theoretical understanding of imperialism. It was Mao Tse-tung's theoretical formulation and successful application of the theory of revolution in feudal China that inspired them to consider the possibility of a revolution in a non-industrialized country.⁵⁶ It was Che Guevara and Fidel Castro's victory in a guerrilla war that attracted them to the idea of guerrilla warfare and people's army, and it was the effectiveness of the struggle of urban-guerrilla organizations in Latin America that encouraged them to form their own urban-guerrilla organization.

The influence of Islam and Marxism was, however, a problematic one due to the inherent and essential contradictions between Islam and Marxism. Yet the early Mojāhedīn were able to reach some kind of reconciliation by discovering 'revolutionary Islam.' In the thought and works of Mehdi Bāzargān, 'Alī Sharī'atī and Āyatollāh Ṭāleqānī, the Mojāhedīn found a new understanding of Islam that did not contradict their knowledge of Marxism as the ideology of revolution.

What was lacking now was an organization with devoted members to propagate and apply the teachings of 'revolutionary Islam'. Mojāhedīn saw it as their historical responsibility to establish this organization, which they did progressively between the years of 1963-1968. Moreover, in their analysis of the history of the struggle of the Iranian people, the Mojāhedīn realized several reasons for the failure of the past struggles;

Abrahamian implicitly admits this fact in the "Acknowledgements," where he expresses his biases. See also Suroosh Irfani's sympathetic account of the Mojāhedīn (*Revolutionary Islam*, 89-116), which provides a good complimentary source to Abrahamian's work. Of special interest is "Appendix One" (233-61), where the texts of defence speeches along with short biographies of some prominent Mojāhedīn members, including Mas'ūd Rajavī, are published.

⁵⁵ See for example *Estethmār (Exploitation)* by Sa'id Mosen, reprinted and reproduced in a pamphlet form from *Mojāhed* by "Supporters of the Moslem Students Society" in Austin Texas. A note at the beginning of the work explains that this pamphlet was originally taught by Sa'id Mohsen to the Mojāhedīn members in the years preceding the 1971 mass arrests. Its manuscripts, however, were destroyed during the police raids on Mojāhedīn bases in 1971. Yet another member of the Mojāhedīn, Farhād-e Šafā, was able to reproduce it again. It is important to note that this study in Marxist political economy which covers topics such as "commodity," "exploitation," "surplus value," etc., is produced in a series entitled "Ideological issues," rather than in another series entitled "Political teachings."

⁵⁶ The Mojāhedīn's admiration of Mao Tse-tung was so strong that when, in the earlier days, they wanted to "win over" Mehdi Bāzargān, they offered him translations of Mao's works. See Fred Halliday, "Inside the Iranian Opposition" in *The Nation*, 26 Sept. 1981, 274.

1. Lack of a revolutionary organization. Past struggles were always led by a charismatic leader and collapsed when the leader died, was killed, imprisoned, or bought.
2. Lack of professionalism. Past revolutionaries were not full-time professional revolutionaries but were involved more incidentally in the struggle.
3. Lack of a systematized ideology. Past movements did not have a clear-cut and coherent ideology with definite goals and objectives.
4. Incompatibility of modes of struggle with the existing social situation. The leaders of the past struggles were unable to figure out the most appropriate mode of responding to the situation at each historical juncture.⁵⁷

These realizations motivated the Mojāhedīn to form an organization that was run by professional revolutionaries who based their struggle on a systematized ideology from which they derived their goals and objectives.

The Mojāhedīn's success in recruiting members was phenomenal. Their religious leaning on one hand, and their revolutionary professionalism on the other, were instrumental in attracting young university students who came predominantly from religious families, but found that Islam, as they had learned it, was not of much help in the face of the political realities which they witnessed in society.

⁵⁷ See "The History of the PMOI 1965-1971 part 2" in *Mojahed (English)* 1, no. 6 (1980): 20.

The founders of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran arrived at the following conclusions in their assessment of the struggle in the past:

- a) The principal [factor] in defeats incurred in [the] struggle in the past was... primarily, the lack of qualified leadership.
- b) As the conditions for the struggle became more and more complex, the leadership did not demonstrate the ability to adapt to the complexity of the situation... Thus the methods and modes of struggle have not been compatible with the social situation. In this respect, the founders determined that armed struggle was the necessary mode for this stage of the revolution.
- c) The struggle in the past fundamentally lacked appropriate revolutionary organization.
- d) Previously, the struggle—particularly, on the leadership level—has not been professional; in other words, the leadership has not devoted itself full-time to the struggle as its principal task.
- e) The struggle has not been approached as a science with its own body of knowledge and methods; as a result, [the] struggle in the past has not enjoyed precise strategy and policy.
- f) The struggle in the past has not had an ideological orientation.

In 1971, however, the Mojāhedīn were reported to the police by a veteran communist informer,⁵⁸ and consequently a large number of them were arrested. During the following year, sixty-nine of the arrested members of the Mojāhedīn were put on trial, which accounted for "half of the organization's fully committed membership,"⁵⁹ including eleven of the central cadre's sixteen members.⁶⁰

The impact of this mass trial was very heavy on the organization and consequently a re-organization took place throughout the whole structure of the organization. This resulted in the coming to power of young members who did not have the same level of competence and grounding in Islam as the early founders.

In 1975 an ideological split occurred inside the three-man central committee during which two members of that committee chose Marxism as the ideology of the organization, despite the disagreement of the third member. The split spread throughout the rest of the organization, resulting in the existence of two parallel organizations, each claiming to be the real Mojāhedīn.⁶¹

The confusion created by the existence of two organizations with opposing ideologies, yet each claiming the title of Mojāhedīn, had a negative impact on the body of supporters and sympathizers from which the Mojāhedīn received their financial support and recruitment. This was in addition to the pressure of street battles with the Shāh's secret police which took a heavy toll on the Mojāhedīn. Consequently the Mojāhedīn were forced into a defensive position and lost their ability to be a ready-to-strike revolutionary organization. From 1975 onwards, the Mojāhedīn organization was located mainly inside the Qar Prison.

During the few months preceding the 1979 Revolution the Mojāhedīn were able to re-organize themselves completely while they were gradually being released from prison. They took an active role in the revolutionary activities of the time and led the final battle against the army and the Royal Guard, a battle which made the Revolution triumphant.

After the Revolution, the Mojāhedīn became a mass organization with branches spread throughout the country. Between November 1979 and January 1980, the Mojāhedīn devoted all of their energy to the presiden-

⁵⁸ Abrahamian, *Mojahedin*, 128

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁶¹ In 1979 the Marxist faction conducted a "self-criticism," and announced that the name Mojāhedīn belonged to their Muslim counterpart. They later chose the name Peykār (Struggle) for their organization and have ever since been known by that name. The complete name of this organization reads "Sāzemān-e peykār dar rāh-e āzādī-e ṭabaqeh-e kārgar (The organization of struggle in the path to the emancipation of the working class)." The early Mojāhedīn's fascination with Mao Tse-tung is best seen in Peykār, where Maoism is the leading ideological force.

tial elections, in an attempt to have their leader, Mas'ūd Rajavī, become Iran's first president. Their attempts were utterly frustrated, however, when Āyatollāh Khomeinī cancelled Rajavī's candidacy on the grounds that Rajavī could not be trusted to abide by the constitution which he had refused to endorse. This reference was to the Mojāhedīn's refusal to endorse the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran which they claimed had major and essential short-comings; the Mojāhedīn had refused to endorse the constitution despite Khomeinī's call on all Muslims to vote yes on the referendum to ratify it.

After this setback, the Mojāhedīn tried their chances in the parliamentary elections of 1980. During four months, between Feb. and May 1980, the Mojāhedīn were able to muster impressive support for their candidates, but their electoral rival, the Islamic Republic Party, used all possible means—legal and otherwise—to prevent Mojāhedīn's representatives from gaining seats in the parliament. The presidential elections and parliamentary elections, despite their negative results for the Mojāhedīn, did provide some positive opportunities. During their campaign for these two elections, the Mojāhedīn were able to introduce themselves to the masses, publicize their plans for the future of the country, and build a mass support system for themselves that was unprecedented in the history of political organizations in Iran.

At this time, the Mojāhedīn came to two important conclusions which determined all of their consequent decisions. These conclusions were, in the words of Abrahamian:

[F]irst, that they enjoyed enough popular support to constitute the main counterweight to the clerical power structure; second, that they would not be allowed to function as a loyal opposition within the Islamic Republic.⁶²

A new turning point in the history of the Mojāhedīn came on 20 June 1981, a few days after Khomeinī had removed President Banī-Šadr from his post in response to the latter's public criticism of the I.R.P.'s policies. On that day a nation-wide demonstration called by the Mojāhedīn, in obvious disregard for an earlier ban on street demonstrations issued by Khomeinī, was crushed severely by government forces. The Mojāhedīn did an impressive job in Tehran by organizing, in a few days, as many as 500,000 people to participate in this march intended as a show of force to the I.R.P., which had silenced all critical voices after the removal of Banī-Šadr. The demonstrators were forced, however, to retreat after government agents killed fifty of their members, injured two hundred, and arrested one thou-

⁶² Abrahamian, *Mojahedin*, 205.

sand of them "in the vicinity of Tehran University alone."⁶³ In the rest of the central part of Tehran, and in the other major cities of Iran similar incidents took place, and by the end of the day, the Mojāhedīn were declared illegal, and turned into an underground organization once again.

This incident was criticized by the Mojāhedīn's rivals and opponents as an unrealistic attempt to force a general uprising throughout the country, with the aim of seizing power from above. The Mojāhedīn, on the other hand, tried to turn this defeat into an ideological victory by calling 20 June 1981 the Mojāhedīn's *Āshūrā*. They had acted, the Mojāhedīn argued, according to the lesson they had derived from the example of Imām Ḥusayn, according to which one must rise up against oppression—particularly when it is done under the guise of Islam—even if all the odds are against one's immediate success.

At this time, Āyatollāh Khomeinī unleashed a deadly attack on the Mojāhedīn, which gradually decreased and limited the growth of the organization and eventually paralyzed it. Mass arrests of the Mojāhedīn, their supporters and sympathizers, and their consequent imprisonment, torture and execution gradually took a heavy toll on the Mojāhedīn. Also the Mojāhedīn lost many of their members in street gun-battles with the Revolutionary Guards and police, and in suicide missions in which their members would blow themselves up with hand grenades in order to assassinate influential government agents.

Meanwhile, on 29 July 1981, Mojāhedīn's leader Rajavī fled to Paris along with dethroned President Banī-Šadr, to announce the formation of the National Council of Resistance (N.C.R.) headed by Rajavī. The N.C.R. was to prepare for the liberation of Iran and the establishment of the Democratic Islamic Republic in the near future. Rajavī's stay in France, however, lasted much longer than initially anticipated and continued well into 1986.

From 1981 onward, the Mojāhedīn entered a new phase of their activities which saw an increasing involvement in international political power-plays. The Mojāhedīn created numerous lobbying groups and focused heavily on Western parliamentary process to muster support for their plans to isolate the Iranian government, gain recognition for the N.C.R. as the only viable alternative to the present regime, and come to power with the approval of the international community. They also continued military operations against the Iranian government, initially from inside the major cities in Iran, later on from their bases in Iranian Kurdistan, and finally from their garrisons located in northern Iraq. Their

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 219.

priorities, nonetheless, increasingly shifted in favour of political—rather than military—activities.

In June 1986, the government of Iran finally succeeded in convincing the French authorities to close down the Mojāhedīn headquarters in Paris, as a friendly gesture for the proposed improvement in the relationship between the two countries. This forced Rajavī and his associates to move to Iraq, where they had already established military camps for carrying out military operations against the Iranian armed forces. During the 1990's some of the Mojāhedīn gradually returned to France to resume their former activities. The majority of the Mojāhedīn's leadership and the bulk of its members, nonetheless, still live in different garrisons in Northern Iraq and await a favorable situation that would enable them to return to Iran and seize power.

The Mojāhedīn's Ideology

The Mojāhedīn's ideology is a peculiar blend of Islam and Marxism;⁶⁴ its early publications, serving as the basic ideological texts of the organization, are a good indication of this blend. These publications are as follows:

1. *Shenākht (Epistemology)*.
2. *Takāmol (Evolution)*.
3. *Eqteṣād be zabān-e sādeh (Economics in a simple language)*. This pamphlet is a free translation of Karl Marx's *Wage, labour, and capital*/made by the Mojāhedīn.
4. *Estethmār (Exploitation)*.
5. *Rāh-e Anbiyā' va rāh-e bashar (The path of the Prophets, and the path of man)*.
6. *Nehat-e Hoseynī (Husayn's movement)*. In some editions, this book is published under the title *Rāh-e Hoseyn (The path of Husayn)*.
7. *Cheqūneh Qur'ān biyāmūzīm (How to study the Qur'ān)*.

⁶⁴ The Mojāhedīn, however, have never accepted that their ideology is eclectic and have repeatedly refuted this assertion. During the Shāh's time they published a book which attacked his regime for labelling them "Islamic Marxists" and which tried to demonstrate that their ideology was purely Islamic. For their English version of this work, see *In Response to the Recent Accusations of the Iranian Regime* (n.p., 1977). After the revolution, the Mojāhedīn organized a series of lectures in which one of their members attempted to make a systematic and elaborate discussion of the theme of eclecticism. In these lectures, later published in book form, the Mojāhedīn argued that their ideology is the only coherent and systematized Islamic ideology available, and is thus free from the intrusion of other ideologies. See *Elteqāt va ideoloxh-hā-ye elteqātī (Eclecticism and eclectic ideologies)* (Tehran, 1979).

8. *Do tafsīr az Mojāhedīn-e rāstīn-e khalq-e Iran (Two commentaries from the true Mojāhedīn of the Iranian masses)*. This work contains two commentaries on two separate chapters of *Nahj al-balāghah*, and according to the Freedom Movement of Iran (outside of Iran) which has published and distributed it, was sent to them by the Muslim Mojāhedīn after the ideological split within the organization.⁶⁵

As two former Mojāhedīn members who later became Marxist have expressed, the Mojāhedīn were "convinced that true Islam was compatible with the theories of social evolution, historical determinism, and the class struggle."⁶⁶ Thus the Mojāhedīn argued that *tawhīd* meant not only the unity of God, but also the unity of man and his society, and the unity of man and nature. Therefore a classless society, they concluded, is a *tawhīdī* society, and hence they formulated the phrase "on towards the classless *tawhīdī* - society."

The Mojāhedīn also believed that *tawhīd* meant the Uniqueness of God as well as His Unity. God's Uniqueness, they maintained, rests in His not being material, and thus being beyond and above creation. Creation, however, is a material phenomenon and therefore governed by the laws of historical dialectics. Hence it is only God to Whom the laws of historical dialectics are not applicable due to His Uniqueness.

As a complimentary idea to their belief in historical dialectics, the Mojāhedīn believed in the theory of evolution, with the qualification that it was God Who set the laws of evolution in motion rather than some accidental cause. Consequently, they argued that the evolution of creation has now reached the higher phase of social evolution, after the completion of the phase of man's physical evolution. The main obstacle on the path of social evolution of Third World Countries, it was stressed, was world imperialism. The solution for the problem of imperialism, the Mojāhedīn concluded, was in the formation of an anti-imperialist front that would unite all the nationalist and revolutionary forces in their common struggle against imperialism.

Another teaching of the Mojāhedīn stressed that the path of God is the same as the path of man, and thus living, fighting, and dying for the sake of God means living, fighting and dying for the sake of fellow human beings. This belief was so strong among the Mojāhedīn that they altered the traditional Muslim opening phrase of "In the Name of God, the Most

⁶⁵ Abrahamian's list does not contain items number 4 and 8. Instead it refers to a seventh book by the name of *Motalecat-e Marksisti (Studies on Marxism)*, which according to him is "a brief summary of the materialist conception of history and society" (Abrahamian, *Mojāhedīn*, 92).

⁶⁶ As quoted *ibid.*, 92.

Beneficent and the Most Merciful," to "In the Name of God and In the Name of the Heroic People of Iran."

Nowhere is the eclectic nature of the Mojāhedīn's ideology as apparent, nor as concisely expressed, as in its emblem.⁶⁷ The symbolic features of Marxism, Islam and Nationalism are quite discernible in this emblem. The heavy Persian print at the bottom reads, "The People's Mojāhedīn of Iran." Above it the date of the founding of the organization is stated as 1344 H.Sh. corresponding to 1965 C.E. The sickle and the anvil symbolize the central role of peasants and the working class. The star at the top is the star of revolution, and the clenched fist and the rifle signify the necessity of armed struggle, with the outline of Iran's map indicating the context in which this struggle is to be waged. Also the ensemble of the rifle and the sickle in the same hand stresses the unity of peasants and the working class. The olive branch on one side and the outline of the globe on the other side express Mojāhedīn's desire for global peace, the attainment of which makes revolutions inevitable and indispensable. The circle encompassing the emblem symbolizes the larger world-wide context of struggle on one hand, and the internationalist outlook of the Mojāhedīn on the other hand. The red colour used for printing the emblem signifies both the revolutionary character of the Mojāhedīn and their commitment to Shi'ism, although most people realize only the former indication. Finally, the verse of Qur'ān on the top reads, "Allah has honored those who strive and fight (*Mujāhidīn*) above those who sit (at home), by a special reward,"⁶⁸ implying God's great reward for the Mojāhedīn over against those who do not join them in the armed struggle.

In the period between February 1979 and June 1981, the Mojāhedīn produced several ideological works which emphasized the political aspects of important religious concepts and practices. These works are as follows:

1. *Āshūrā falsafeh-e āzādī* (*Āshūrā, the philosophy of freedom*).
2. *Namāz-e jom'eh* (*Friday prayer*).
3. *Falsafeh-e Emām-e Zamān* (*The philosophy of al-Mahdī*).
4. *Falsafeh-e sha'āer* (*The philosophy of religious practices*).

⁶⁷ A reproduction of this emblem can be found in *ibid.*, 102.

⁶⁸ S. 4:95. This verse, however, is a part of a larger verse that reads:

Not equal are those Believers who sit (at home) and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the cause of God with their goods and their persons. God hath granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit (at home). Unto all (in Faith) hath God promised good: but those who strive and fight hath He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a special reward [Yusuf Ali, trans., *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān*, 3rd. ed. (Cairo, 1938), 210-11].

5. *Tashrīḥ-e falsafī-e: eid-e qorbān, namāz-e jom'eh, eid-e feṭr, Emām-e zamān* (The philosophical explanation of: 'Id al-aḍḥā, Friday prayer, 'Id al-fiṭr, al-Mahdī).
6. *Varshekastegī-e tārikhī-e dark-e khordeh būrzhūvāzī az Islām* (The historical bankruptcy of the petit-bourgeois understanding of Islam).
7. *Parto-vī az ziyārat-e Āshūrā* (A ray from Āshūrā prayer).

The most important ideological work of the Mojāhedīn from this period, however, is a fifteen-volume work entitled *Tabyīn-e jahān: qavāed va mafhūm-e takāmol* (Explanation of the world: the principles and concept of evolution).⁶⁹ *Tabyīn-e jahān* was intended to give a comprehensive explanation of the world and show how evolution was a scientific fact, only misunderstood by materialist scientists as being an automatic process which happened accidentally rather than as a process governed by divine will and guidance. Originally delivered by Rajavī to a large group of new members and close sympathizers in the context of weekly ideological classes, *Tabyīn-e jahān* was to replace former ideological works of the Mojāhedīn by setting all of their ideological concepts within the context of this single work. Consequently it became the main ideological work of the Mojāhedīn which was to be studied and understood by all members and close sympathizers of the Mojāhedīn.⁷⁰

Points of Convergence between Ṭāleqānī and the Mojāhedīn

Despite the apparent differences between a revolutionary organization with strong Marxist undertones and a prominent Āyatollāh, the Mojāhedīn and Ṭāleqānī had many basic views and interests in common. These common beliefs, although varying in depth and degree, were nevertheless present and easily discernable. Their main common ideas could be summarized as follows:

1. Jihād and martyrdom. Both Ṭāleqānī and the Mojāhedīn believed that the central duty of a Muslim was to fight against all kinds of injustice.

⁶⁹ Abrahamian's reference to this work as *Tabayon-e jahān* is incorrect; *Mojahedin*, 250.

⁷⁰ Shortly afterwards, the Mojāhedīn conducted another series of classes which dealt with questions raised by participants in Rajavī's classes, elaborating and clarifying issues that needed more discussion. These lectures were published under the title *Parsesh va pāsokh* (Questions and answers) (Tehran, 1979), and became the complimentary volume to *Tabyīn-e jahān*.

2. Belief in the sameness of the path of God and the path of the masses.
3. Belief in a participatory form of government with particular reference to consultative councils.
4. Disagreement with the notion of one-man rule, and consequently disagreement with the notion of *marja'-e taqlid*.⁷¹
5. Nationalist sentiments and an urge for national unity against the enemies of the nation. For instance, both Ṭāleqānī and the Mojāhedīn openly admired the famous nationalist leader Dr. Moḥammad-e Moṣaddeq, and considered themselves to be his followers.⁷²
6. International solidarity with oppressed people, especially the people of Palestine.
7. Belief in the necessity of a revolutionary organization to bring about revolution.
8. Respect for all 'authentic' revolutionaries regardless of their nationality and ideology.

These similarities in thought which were also translated into action, resulted in a close relationship between Ṭāleqānī and the Mojāhedīn. They mutually supported each other both inside and outside of prison, before and after the revolution, against the Shāh and against the conservative clergy. The relationship between the Mojāhedīn and Ṭāleqānī is an interesting aspect of modern Iranian history and deserves an independent study. Here it suffices to say that although both Ṭāleqānī and the Mojāhedīn viewed their relationship as that of teacher and students, and that of father and children,⁷³ the exact nature of this relationship is subject to controversy and was much debated in the aftermath of the revolution. The Mojāhedīn claimed to have always had the privilege of receiving an unconditional support by Ṭāleqānī, but their opponents argued that Ṭāleqānī's support was given mainly to the founders of the Mojāhedīn in their struggle

⁷¹ A.K.S. Lambton, "A Reconsideration of the position of the Marja' Al-Taqlid and the Religious Institution . . .," in *Studia Islamica* 20 (1964): 125-26, also Abrahamian, *Mojāhedīn*, 87. Although only Hanīfnezhād's rejection of *marja'-e taqlid* is reported by Abrahamian, it nevertheless became a tradition among the Mojāhedīn to follow Hanīfnezhād's example and subscribe to such a rejection.

⁷² For an interesting anecdote that exemplifies Ṭāleqānī's nationalist sentiment, see Algar, "Introduction," 12.

⁷³ Shortly before the 1979 Revolution, Ṭāleqānī went to the house of the Reẓā'ī family to visit the newly released Rajavī and other prominent figures of the Mojāhedīn. In that meeting which was witnessed by a large crowd of revolutionary activists as well as by the general public, Rajavī stressed the relationship between the Mojāhedīn and Ṭāleqānī by addressing Ṭāleqānī as Mojāhedīn's "ideological father." Ṭāleqānī, in turn, acknowledged this relationship by addressing the Mojāhedīn as "you men and you young people who are the inheritors of Qur'anic thought";

against the Shāh.⁷⁴ Others maintained that Ṭāleqānī's support of the Mojāhedīn was to be understood in the context of his policy of supporting any organization or person who fought against injustice. Ṭāleqānī supported the Mojāhedīn, they argued, just in the same way as he had supported Dr. Moṣaddeq, the Fadā'iyān-e Islām, or even Marxists in their struggle against the Shāh.

Although all of these views contain a certain degree of truth, the reality seems to fall somewhere in between. Ṭāleqānī's support of the Mojāhedīn was indeed part of his general policy of supporting any struggle against injustice, but it took on a special dimension due to his personal involvement with the Mojāhedīn. On the other hand, Ṭāleqānī's support was not quite as unconditional as the Mojāhedīn would have liked it to be. For example, in May 1979 Moḥammad Reżā Sa'ādātī, a leading member of the Mojāhedīn, was arrested by one of many autonomous groups of Revolutionary Guards after he had visited some Soviet officials at the Soviet embassy, and was subsequently charged with spying for the Soviet Union. Ṭāleqānī defended Sa'ādātī and declared that he was innocent; yet he criticized the Mojāhedīn for acting in an immature and unprofessional way.

Furthermore Ṭāleqānī paid special attention not to be drawn directly into the conflict between the Mojāhedīn and Khomeinī, as was exemplified during the April crisis. In April 1979, Ṭāleqānī went into hiding to protest the arbitrary arrest of his sons by yet another autonomous group of Revolutionary Guards. In the midst of nation-wide demonstrations in support of Ṭāleqānī, and in the midst of a general anticipation of some form of imminent showdown between Ṭāleqānī and Khomeinī that prevailed, the Mojāhedīn issued a statement condemning the arrests and announcing their readiness to put all their forces under Ṭāleqānī's command to assist him in resolving the crisis. After a few days, however, Ṭāleqānī emerged in Qom, met with Khomeinī and issued a reconciliatory statement that not only avoided any confrontation with Khomeinī, but emphasized the latter's leadership by putting the matter in his hands for investigation.

A crucial issue that should be emphasized here is Ṭāleqānī's independent-mindedness. Throughout his life, Ṭāleqānī retained his independence in the midst of numerous groupings and factions that were continuously forming around him and which required him to work hard to reconcile. For example, despite the strong support that Ṭāleqānī gave to Dr. Moṣaddeq

he also emphasized Mojāhedīn's complimentary role by stating "we have reached the end of the line, and [now] you should complete this path." For the full text of both speeches see Deldam, *Riḥlat*, 159-69.

⁷⁴ In Western scholarship this view is voiced by Hamid Algar who argues that "there can be little doubt... that his [Ṭāleqānī's] warm support of them [the Mojāhedīn] ceased even before the triumph of the Islamic revolution"; "Introduction," 17.

and despite his backing of the secular side over against the religious side headed by his own colleague Āyatollāh Kāshānī, during the split within the National Front in 1953, Ṭāleqānī never joined Moṣaddeq's Front as a member. Later on in prison, Ṭāleqānī kept his independent position and cooperated with the leftist prisoners despite the polarization that had occurred between Muslim and Marxist prisoners and the explicit instructions by other religious personalities ordering the Muslims not to cooperate with the Marxists even in the everyday affairs of the prison. Similarly Ṭāleqānī never joined the Mojāhedīn as a member while he campaigned strongly in their favour. After the 1979 Revolution and formation of the Islamic Republic Party (I. R. P.), a political party which enjoyed Khomeinī's blessing and the unanimous support, endorsement and membership of almost all famous 'ulamā' and clerics, Ṭāleqānī kept his independence and did not register as a member of the I. R. P. Later on in the meetings of the Assembly of Experts, Ṭāleqānī exerted strong independence and offered his own views and suggestions amidst a unified view presented by I. R. P. members who pressed for their party's line.⁷⁵ Keeping in mind Ṭāleqānī's eagerness for independent judgement, his tendency to encourage reconciliation between all factions, and the special caution he exerted to avoid being drawn directly into the conflict between the Mojāhedīn and Khomeinī, it becomes easier to understand why he did not support the Mojāhedīn unconditionally, as the Mojāhedīn expected him to do, and why he did not defend them at all occasions, despite his strong ties with them.

The premature death of Ṭāleqānī shortly after the revolution left his relationship with the Mojāhedīn vague and ambiguous, and consequently subject to speculation. It would have been easier to reach a conclusion had Ṭāleqānī lived on and witnessed the inevitable clash between the Mojāhedīn and Khomeinī,⁷⁶ a clash that would have forced him to take sides. Nevertheless, we can conclude that Ṭāleqānī's understanding of Islam was so close to the Mojāhedīn's view that they inevitably were drawn to each other. At the heart of their relationship lay a common belief in the revolutionary nature of Islam and a shared sense of commitment to live according to the requirements of its message. Thus despite the differences in their educational backgrounds, generations, and revolutionary professionalism, Ṭāleqānī and the Mojāhedīn became—each in their dis-

⁷⁵ "The late Ayatullah Bihishti recalled that Taleghani often displayed his characteristic independence of thought while he served as chairman of the Revolutionary Council, expressing views—especially on matters of foreign policy—that differed both from those of the provisional government and from those of most members of the Revolutionary Council"; Algar, "Introduction," 20, fn. 11.

⁷⁶ The inevitability of such a clash was obvious to any observer of modern developments in Iran. That Khomeinī and the I. R. P. had no confusion concerning this fact and therefore never trusted the Mojāhedīn, is obvious from the title "*monāfeqin*" (hypocrites) which they applied to the Mojāhedīn. The Mojāhedīn, on the other hand, were also quite aware of the inevitability of a clash with Khomeinī, but did not wish it to be imposed on them prematurely. See Rajavi's

DAVID ROBERTS AND THE IDEOLOGY OF IMPERIALISM

Among the factors that shaped British ideas about the Middle East during the Victorian period was the work of the Scottish artist David Roberts. The sketches which he drew during a visit to Egypt and Syria from 24 September 1838 to 23 May 1839 served as the basis for 247 tinted lithographs, published in London by F. G. Moon serially in 41 parts and then in six folio volumes between 1841 and 1849, as well as for several water colors and over 55 oil paintings of which 31 were exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1840 and 1861.

It was the lithographs that had the greatest impact. The two three-volume sets into which they were bound, entitled *The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea and Arabia* (hereafter called *Holy Land*) and *Egypt and Nubia* (hereafter called *Egypt*), have been rated as "the most ambitious work ever published in England with lithographed plates."¹ Its advance subscribers included the Queen, the Prime Minister, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Duke of Wellington, and 630 other notables; and it was rapturously reviewed by the critics. An octavo monochrome edition followed in 1855-56 and reproductions of individual prints appeared in many forms. These vivid views of unfamiliar lands were "extremely popular and established Roberts as one of the most celebrated British artists of the day."² They also established in many people's minds impressions of what the Middle East was like, and may well have fostered, or simply reinforced, attitudes regarding its inhabitants that were politically significant.

The possibility of a relationship between the Roberts prints and the ideology of imperialism is suggested by the writings of Edward W. Said. His argument that British and French "Orientalists" characterized Arabs in such a way as to facilitate subsequent efforts to legitimate European dominion over them rests on what has been *written* about the "Orient," and gives no attention to *visual* representations.³ Some of his notions have been applied to French paintings by Linda Nochlin, but the closest approach to such an analysis of Roberts's work is a study by Kenneth

¹ Michael Twyman, *Lithography 1800-50* (London, 1970), 220

² William Hardie, *Scottish Painting 1837 to the Present* (London, 1990), 25. For similar assessments of the popularity of the prints, see Martin Hardie, *Water-Colour Painting in Britain*, 3 vols. (London, 1968), III: 181; Edward Lucie-Smith, "The British in Egypt," *Art and Artists*, no. 200 (1983): 4; Jane Quigley, *Prout and Roberts* (London, 1926), 137-39; Graham Reynolds, "British Artists Abroad V: Roberts in Spain, Egypt and Palestine," *Geographical Magazine* 21 (1949): 393.

³ See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978)

Bendiner that focuses on social and religious themes and does not directly address the ideological issue.⁴ This paper offers a comprehensive and systematic examination of how David Roberts perceived and portrayed Arabs, with a view to determining whether he might have contributed to a "cultural conditioning" that was favorable to British imperialism in the Middle East.

The data for such an investigation are principally the lithographed prints, the journal which the artist kept throughout his stay in the East, and his correspondence. Also pertinent are the descriptive texts or letterpress published with the lithographs, for they too expressed his thoughts—although not always. George Croly, who was employed to write the texts for *Holy Land*, incorporated excerpts from the journal in his essays, but rejected some of Roberts's suggestions. William Brockedon, author of the letterpress for *Egypt*, was more compliant; indeed, Roberts questioned whether he had "given one *original idea*—let alone any original matter—but what I have furnished him with."⁵

Roberts seems at first glance to be an unlikely producer of politically relevant images. Although he followed British politics closely and was a keen supporter of the Whigs, he was not a political activist. One evening in Cairo while reflecting on political developments at home he affirmed: "But with politics they say we artists have nothing to do. With all my heart be it so."⁶

Moreover, Roberts was essentially a topographical artist specializing in the detailed, accurate representation of architecture and landscape. Neither his interest nor his talent lay primarily in the drawing of human figures. He did introduce people into all but eight of the 247 lithographs, but most often as nothing more than distant and indistinct accessories. Indeed, clear facial features can be distinguished in only 43 pictures and in over half of these the faces lack personality or expression. In no more than 20 scenes can it be said that individuals are the dominant element.

⁴ See Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," *Art in America* 71 (1983): 118-31, 187-91; Kenneth Bendiner, "David Roberts in the Near East: Social and Religious Themes," *Art History* 6 (1983): 67-81.

⁵ David Roberts to Henry Bicknell, 9 June 1848, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh (hereafter NLS), ACC 7723, Box I. I am grateful to the authorities of the National Library of Scotland for permission to quote extracts from Roberts's letters and from the manuscript of his "Eastern Journal."

⁶ "Roberts' Journal in Egypt 1838" (hereafter "RJB"), 19 Jan. 1839, 183, NLS, ACC 7723, Box II. This is the first of two volumes of his "Eastern Journal," the second being "Roberts' Journal in Syria 1839" (hereafter "RJS"), also NLS, ACC 7723, Box II. Both were transcribed in ink by his daughter, Christine, from the original pencil version of which only a small fragment remains. There are several insertions in pencil by Roberts himself. See Helen Guiterman, *David Roberts R.A. 1796-1864*, 3d ed. (London, 1986), 6-7.

Roberts sketched in the figures for artistic reasons. They frequently served to provide scale, emphasizing by contrast the colossal size of the Pharaonic monuments or the grandeur of the Sinai hills. Sometimes their function was to focus the viewer's gaze towards a certain object. In other cases they had a balancing effect. Moreover, their costumes provided bright color to relieve the dullness of sand and stone. Often the figures added an element of human interest, animating the scene and rendering it more picturesque.⁷

Art critics have differed in their assessment of Roberts' figures. Some have found them to be cleverly introduced and subtly posed, while to others they have seemed to be obtrusive and lifeless. For a political analysis, however, what is important is not so much the artistic merits of the figures as the traits they suggest for those represented and the attitudes towards them that they might engender in the viewer.

"Orientalists" are said to have sharply distinguished Arabs from Europeans, depicting "them" as altogether alien—"the Other"—separated from "us" by differences that were absolute and inherent. Such a dichotomy, it is argued, blocked a consciousness of common humanity and rendered "their" subjection to "our" rule more readily justifiable.

Roberts was certainly impressed by the otherness of what he encountered. Indeed, in Egypt he repeatedly described himself as "bewildered" by the multiplicity of unusual sights. Some passages in his journal suggest that he was interested in the people simply as exotic subjects for his sketch-book, regarding them as nothing more than adjuncts of an extraordinary scene to be captured with pencil and brush. He repeatedly exclaimed that they were "picturesque."

There are other passages, however, which indicate that he regarded Arabs as fellow human beings who elicited his sympathy and whose odd and sometimes irritating behavior was understandable. He occasionally tried to see things through their eyes and pointed to similarities between them and Englishmen. For example, when prevented from completing a sketch by the press of onlookers at Asyūṭ, he wrote:

And yet I do not know they were worse than other towns would have been under the same circumstances. Fancy an Arab in an English country town. Would the people behave better? I fear not especially if that Arab was employed in a way that they could not conceive what he was doing. The employment I was engaged on was as much to them as if the said Arab were to spread his carpet and go to prayers which is their custom 5 or 6 times a day. This

⁷ See Briony Llewellyn, "Roberts's Pictures of the Near East," in *David Roberts*, eds. Helen Guiterman and Briony Llewellyn (Oxford and London, 1986), 77-81.

would be to the bumpkins of an English village as incomprehensible a proceeding as that I was engaged in was to the people here.⁸

Most of Roberts's pictures certainly convey the impression of otherness. Whatever the location, the people are always dressed in unfamiliar costumes and are frequently engaged in strange occupations. Very few of the lithographs emphasize the humanity of his subjects and evoke feelings of identification or compassion. Some consider this to be particularly true of "The Letter Writer, Cairo" (*Egypt*, III, 31), which shows an anxious woman, identified in the letterpress as a Copt, dictating to a scribe.⁹ Touching human qualities are also apparent in "Group of Nubians at Wady Kardassy" (*Egypt*, II, 3), which shows one person consoling another; and in "Pyramids of Geezeh, From the Nile" (*Egypt*, I, 3), which shows a man playfully embracing a child. Only the last of these three features a Muslim Arab, however.

"Orientalists" are also charged with having presented those about whom they wrote as a generalized collectivity whose members were essentially similar to each other and lacked the personal identities that would have provided a basis for sympathetic attitudes towards them and for treating them as equals.

Roberts was struck by differences between the Egyptians and other Middle Easterners; comparing them unfavorably in his journal with the Turks, the Nubians, the Bedouins, the Druzes, and the Maronites; but he failed to differentiate among the people within each of these groups. Most of his pictures reflect that failure. This is especially true of those containing figures that are far away or crowded together; they usually look more like identical devices for displaying costumes than discrete and real human beings. A conspicuous aspect of the pictures in which people are the central focus is that so few of them—only six in fact—portray Egyptians. The artist's treatment of those whom he disliked was not to depict their negative characteristics explicitly, but to marginalize them or deny them individuality.

The ideology of imperialism maintained that Arabs were inferior and that this circumstance gave the superior Europeans not only a right but also an obligation to rule over them for their own good. This inferiority had several specific dimensions which appeared in the stereotype of Arabs that had been constructed by Western writers.¹⁰ They were held, in

⁸ "RJB," 13 Dec. 1838, 139.

⁹ Katherine Sim, *David Roberts R.A., 1796-1864: A Biography* (London, 1984), 156; Peter A. Clayton, *David Roberts' Egypt* (London, 1986), 5.

¹⁰ For discussions of this stereotype, see Said, 26, 38-42, 201-08; Norman Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh, 1966), xvi, 6, 17-18; Leila Ahmed, *Edward W. Lane* (London, 1978), 85; Sari Nasir, *The Arabs and the English*, 2d ed. (London, 1979), 64-66, 188; Rana Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule* (London, 1988), 6, 39-41.

the first instance, to be incapable of governing themselves satisfactorily, as demonstrated by the fact that their rulers were despotic, corrupt, and inefficient.

Roberts clearly saw Muḥammad 'Alī as an absolute ruler and was much distressed by certain oppressive features of his regime. The artist soon concluded that he was generally disliked by ordinary Egyptians and attributed this principally to the conscription system. In one of the Nile villages he found that "nearly all the men" had cut off their right forefingers "to avoid serving as soldiers." In Cairo he came across "a group of Arabs in a chain of iron collars," and was "much surprised" to learn that they were "conscripts" rather than convicts.¹¹ In Syria, he saw men being manacled and thrust into a dungeon until they could be transported to Egypt for military service, and observed the distress of women whose brothers and husbands had been taken away.

Roberts was also upset by the harsh treatment of prisoners. Near Luxor he encountered a dozen of them in chains on the way to Sanaar where they would be forced to labor in the gold mines, and deduced from the reaction of the local inhabitants that the transit of such a group was a frequent occurrence. He was reminded of Muḥammad 'Alī's ruthlessness when he passed the spot at the Citadel where the "Mamlukes were butchered in cold blood"; he believed "they richly deserved their fate although we shudder at the means taken."¹² Roberts himself was treated very cordially by Muḥammad 'Alī's subordinates, acting on instructions. The Governor of Cairo gave him permission to paint inside its mosques, making him the first non-Muslim to be granted that privilege, on condition that he wear Turkish dress and not use brushes made of hog bristles; and assigned a janissary to protect him. Local officials regularly invited him to share coffee and pipes and often took steps to facilitate his travel. At Aṣwān the Bey who commanded the Pasha's paddle-steamer said that Muḥammad 'Alī had ordered him "to give us all the assistance in his power." The Governor of Jerusalem furnished guides, guards, and horses for a trip to the Dead Sea and Bethlehem; he offered the roof of his own house as a place from which to sketch. He told the artist that Muḥammad 'Alī "in every letter to him expressed his particular desire that the utmost attention should be shewn to Europeans but particularly the English, and that he was fearful that his utmost exertions fell far short of the wishes of his Highness."¹³

Despite the despotism, Roberts believed that there was something to be said in Muḥammad 'Alī's favor. At the end of his stay in Syria, the

¹¹ "RJE," 11 Oct. 1838, 26; 12 Jan. 1839, 176.

¹² "RJE," 24 Dec. 1838, 101.

¹³ "RJE," 31 Oct. 1838, 71; "RJS," 2 April 1839, 107.

artist credited him with having rendered that country as well as Egypt "comparatively safe" for travelers, and concluded that his subjects "are better off than they were under the Sultan." Moreover, he believed that "there is much allowance to be made for the Pasha for the wretched tools he has had to employ."¹⁴

Roberts's favorable impression was strengthened when Muḥammad 'Alī granted him an audience at the palace in Alexandria on the way home. The artist, joined by the British Consul and Lt. Thomas Waghorn who were seeking support for the development of the Overland Route to India across Egypt, found the reception "most cordial" and "unpretending" according to his account as quoted in the text for "Interview with Mehemet Ali in His Palace at Alexandria" (*Egypt*, III, 1). In this picture the Pasha looks not only cordial but also sagacious and even benevolent. No lithograph depicts oppression explicitly, although the letterpress informed the viewer that the woman who appears so anxious in "The Letter Writer, Cairo" (*Egypt*, III, 31) may be dictating a message to someone "torn perhaps from her by the hated and cruel conscription."

Roberts made no reference in his writings to corrupt or inefficient behavior on the part of government agents. He was evidently impressed, however, by how much Egyptians suffered from corruption, for he produced a picture which portrays a corrupt official in action— although this would not be apparent without benefit of its text. "A Group at the Entrance of the Temple of Amun at Goorna, Thebes" (*Egypt*, II, 10) features eight large figures engaged in discussion. At the center is a man with a decidedly dissolute countenance. He was identified by the letterpress as a functionary of the central government who is visiting a village "to collect tribute, or to listen to complaints of maladministration" and who "is ready to decide, not so much upon the justice of the case submitted to him, as to arguments accompanied by bribes." Such visits were said to be "characteristic of law, or the abuse of it in Egypt."

The apologists for imperialism argued that the Arabs needed European rule not only to provide better government but also to promote their economic development and social progress, and referred to several additional shortcomings featured in the Western stereotype of them to support this contention. Thus Arabs were reputed to be indolent, deficient in initiative and perseverance, and undependable. Roberts's experiences led him to agree with this attribution. He was exasperated by what struck him as the laziness and unreliability of most of his employees. The crewmen whom he hired for his Nile voyage slept too much and had to be constantly coaxed or coerced to pull the oars. He had frequent rows with

¹⁴ "RJS," 11 May 1839, 174-75

his captain over whether they should stop for a rest. In Cairo he discharged his personal servant and at Nablus was "obliged to apply the coorbach [whip]" to another because they were so negligent.¹⁵

The *fellahin* cultivating the fields near Abydos struck him as lethargic; he reported that "the morning wind was fresh and bracing at least to me but it seemed to have the very opposite effect upon them." The merchants in the bazaars also seemed to lack energy as they simply sat and smoked and waited for customers. At Bellaroch he wrote of "being followed as usual by a troop of idlers." He estimated that Cairo "contains more idle people than any place of its size in this world." Towards the end of his journey, he asserted that the harsh methods of Muḥammad 'Alī were understandable, given the "natural indolence" of his subjects.¹⁶

The great majority of the people in the lithographs are indeed portrayed as idle—apparently doing nothing more vigorous than day-dreaming, contemplating their surroundings, conversing, smoking, or strolling.

There are some pictures which show Arabs at work—herding goats, drawing or transporting water, loading camels and donkeys, operating irrigation devices, hauling in nets, setting sails or pulling oars, weaving, carrying goods, and offering items for sale. However, even these scenes suggest passivity and docility, for the workers seem to be engaged in the performance of routine tasks which require little assertiveness. Moreover, none of the jobs appears terribly onerous; there are no peasants toiling in the fields or laborers conveying heavy loads, forms of work that Roberts described graphically in his journal.¹⁷

Slothfulness is implied by pictures of poorly maintained buildings in Cairo, although the artist depicted them as in better condition than they actually were according to his written account. A few of the commercial and residential structures appear shabby, but only slightly so. Roberts referred in his journal to visiting "an old mansion. . . now all in ruins," but the portion of what is presumably that residence that is shown in "Entrance to a Private Mansion, Cairo" (*Egypt*, III, 32) is in no such state. Of the dozen or so mosques within the city that are drawn in detail, only the Mosque of Sultan Ḥassan seems in need of repair and even there the signs of neglect are not extensive ("Interior of the Mosque of the Sultan Ḥassan" and "Grand Entrance to the Mosque of the Sultan Ḥassan," *Egypt*, III, 8 and 22), although Roberts described it as "ruinous and dilapidated"

¹⁵ "RJS," 16 April 1839, 126.

¹⁶ "RJE," 10 Dec. 1838, 128-29; 19 Jan. 1839, 182; "RJS," 11 May 1839, 174-75.

¹⁷ On the absence of "scenes of work" in Orientalist art, see Nochlin, 123.

¹⁸ "RJE," 19 Jan. 1839, 180-81; 6 Jan. 1839, 170; 1 Oct. 1838, 19.

and wrote that "like every other mosque as well as the city itself it is fast falling into decay."¹⁸

Another element of the negative stereotype was that the Arabs lived in miserable conditions, having sunk into poverty, filth, and disease under the existing system. Roberts's journal indicates that he was fully aware of and indeed deeply distressed by the squalor around him. As he sailed up the Nile he commented repeatedly on the "wretched" and "miserable" villages. He found their inhabitants "degraded and abject" and "all wretchedly poor," and was repeatedly pestered by beggars. Of the inhabitants at Edfou he wrote:

The rags and filth in which they are enveloped absolutely infect the air. . . . Their skin is beastly. . . . Here I question whether a child is washed from the day of its birth and then the face mouth ears and eyes are covered with miriads of flies.

At Asyūṭ he concluded that "surely in no part of the world is such a ragged, dirty, lousy population to be found," and added that "disease and sundry fears of plague" caused him concern.¹⁹ Back in Cairo, he sketched in "stinking crowded streets,"²⁰ sometimes annoyed "by the most filthy and impertinent mob in existence" and sometimes depressed. "The heart sickens at the sight of so much human misery," he wrote. As he proceeded across Sinai, he rejoiced to have "left all the misery wretchedness and vice of Cairo behind." He was cheered by the "healthy" children who greeted him at Hebron, so "superior to the poor unnatural looking children of Egypt." However, he found many of the Syrian villages to be poverty-stricken, and of Jerusalem he wrote: "Surely there cannot be any city more wretched. . . . All is misery."²¹

There is, however, remarkably little evidence of misery in the Roberts prints. There are no beggars. No one is clad in tattered or dirty clothing. Rubbish appears in only one scene, "Bazaar in the Street Leading to the Mosque of El-Mooristan, Cairo" (*Egypt*, III, 24), and then merely as a bit of litter. The only fellahin dwellings shown are rather innocuous mud huts built on the ruins of Pharaonic temples, too far away to appear as "wretched" as Roberts felt them to be.

No malnourished bodies are to be seen. There is no one obviously suffering from blindness or deformity, although several contemporary travelers commented on the widespread incidence of these disabilities in Egypt. Half a dozen of the distant mourners in "Tombs of the Memlooks, Cairo,

¹⁹ "RJE," 13 Oct. 1838, 30; 26 Nov. 1838, 124; 24 Nov. 1838, 119; 13 Dec. 1838, 138.

²⁰ David Roberts to D. R. Hay, 4 Jan. 1839, NLS, MSS 2255, f. 89.

²¹ "RJE," 3 Jan. 1839, 166; 19 Jan. 1839, 181; "RJS," 14 Feb. 1839, 13; 16 March 1839, 78; 12 April 1839, 119.

with an Arab Funeral" (*Egypt*, III, 21) were identified as blind by the letterpress, as was one of the patrons in "The Coffee Shop of Cairo" (*Egypt*, III, 35), but one looking at these pictures without benefit of the texts would not realize that they were visually impaired.

Arabs were also stereotyped as uncivilized and unprogressive. Roberts found support for this claim in the contrast between present conditions in Egypt and its glorious past. As he observed the inhabitants of Abydos, he "could not help . . . thinking how civilization has been swept as it were from the ground which it once adorned . . . and man himself has again descended to merely a state above barbarism."²² He deplored the modern Arabs' lack of appreciation and respect for the ancient architectural achievements. His pictures of the crude hovels atop the Pharaonic temples are indicative of Arab barbarism, as are those of unconcerned Syrians amidst the classic remains of Baalbec. This point was made explicit in some of the texts. The letterpress for "The Circular Temple, Baalbec" (*Holy Land*, II, 38), for example, asserted that "the wild inhabitants have but little value for ruins beyond their iron and limestone."

This aspect of the stereotype emphasized the Arabs' stubborn attachment to traditional ways of doing things. Roberts was impressed by their "hatred of all innovation,"²³ and depicted that characteristic most pointedly by showing their continued use of primitive irrigation devices.²⁴ The letterpress disparaged such practice, describing one of these devices, known as the shadouf and shown in "Ruins of Luxor from the Southwest" (*Egypt*, I, 15), as "a source of excessive labour and waste of energy to the fellahs," and another, shown in "Persian Water Wheel, Used for Irrigation in Nubia" (*Egypt*, II, 9), as a "clumsy apparatus" moved by bullocks unlike European devices which cleverly harnessed the power of the river itself. There are no scenes of Muḥammad 'Alī's modernizing developments, although Roberts observed at least one of these—an ambitious project to improve one of Cairo's principal squares.

The Western stereotype also characterized Arabs as dishonest, rapacious, and violent. Roberts repeatedly encountered such behavior. While moored one night early in his voyage up the Nile, his servant's clothes were stolen. The crew were "arrant thieves" he wrote; "anything in the shape of eatables is considered a lawful prey along shore." Near Korosco one of the boatmen was badly beaten by villagers who accused him of robbery, and this retribution sparked an affray in which women as well as men were struck with staves. Moreover, the artist was convinced that his crew unnecessarily prolonged the voyage in order to extract additional

²² "RJE," 10 Dec. 1838, 131.

²³ "RJS," 11 May 1839, 175.

²⁴ See Bendiner, 70.

wages from him. Back in Cairo, he soon came to regard his personal servant as "such a thorough rogue I can believe him in nothing,"²⁵ and discharged him after several possessions had disappeared.

As Roberts set out for Syria he expressed relief to be parting from "the dishonest, thieving, . . . rascally . . . Egyptians."²⁶ Shortly, however, he discovered that the Bedouins who had been engaged as escorts across Sinai had deceived him by loading some of the camels with corn intended for use as seed rather than as food en route. He was refused entry to Petra until he had paid tribute to a tribe that claimed to be its guardians. His party was then robbed twice, and Roberts suspected his "protectors" of collusion with the thieves. This experience prompted him to tell his friend, D. R. Hay, that the expression "his hand against any man and the hand of any man against him" was "literally the case" so far as Arabs were concerned.²⁷

On the whole, however, Roberts was favorably impressed by the security that he enjoyed on his journey, and by the orderly fashion in which the Bedouins managed intra-tribal affairs.

There are no illustrations of robbery or violence in any of the lithographs. The possibility of disorder is suggested by the presence of armed civilians in several pictures. "Group of Nubians at Wady Kardassy" (*Egypt*, II, 3) gives a close-up view of men bearing spears, shields, and swords; but they appear to be displaying these weapons, not brandishing them. A long knife and a matchlock rifle are carried by the large central figure in "Arabs of the Desert" (*Holy Land*, III, 2), but his bearing is not threatening. Arabs are holding spears or rifles in other scenes, both Egyptian and Syrian, but in a relaxed manner.

The letterpress for "The Site of Petra" (*Holy Land*, III, 19) identified it as the location where Roberts and his companions were "plundered," and its inhabitants were said to be "the savage and the robber" in the text for "Ruins of a Triumphal Arch, Petra" (*Holy Land*, III, 13); but all the pictures of Petra portray it as an entirely tranquil place. Moreover, Roberts provides in "Conference of the Arabs" (*Holy Land*, III, 14) a representation of an episode he observed at Petra in which a group is disposing peacefully of a charge of theft against one of their number, although the viewer would not realize what was happening without benefit of the letterpress.

Additionally, there was, according to the stereotype, a strong streak of brutality in the Arab character. A dramatic manifestation of this trait was the practice of slavery. Roberts observed several aspects of the slave trade and on occasion expressed outrage at what he saw. The multi-racial slave

²⁵ "RJE," 7 Nov. 1838, 93; 2 Jan. 1839, 165.

²⁶ "RJE," 6 Feb. 1839, 193.

²⁷ David Roberts to D. R. Hay, 25 April 1839, NLS, MSS 2255, f. 90.

market in Alexandria was "peculiarly disgusting... altogether a sickening sight"; to his daughter, Christine, he wrote: "I left it proud that I belonged to a nation who had abolished slavery."²⁸ At Aṣwān he observed a collection of black slaves, most of whom appeared "ill and sickly" and two "in the last stage of consumption." The slave dealer was a "brutal looking fellow." Farther upriver he found villagers fearful of raids by "these inhuman traffickers in flesh and blood." At Asyūṭ, a boat transporting slaves to Cairo moored alongside his craft. Its commander was "a hoary old villain," and the artist regretted not knowing enough Arabic "to tell him the abhorrence in which we English hold his occupation."²⁹

However, Roberts's outrage was tempered by the belief that the slaves' situation was not altogether deplorable and by a tendency to see them primarily as artistic subjects. His comment on encountering a boat filled with slaves at Boulak was that some were "perfect models in form." He found the female slaves in the market at Asyūṭ to be "sleek and plump," and was impressed that they "giggle so much at our dress." The male slaves evoked only the comment that their "features... might pass for Grecian." He had an opportunity to observe at length and to sketch the female slaves in the boat that tied up beside his. This led him to reflect that "with the exception of slaves being torn away from their friends, bad enough of itself God knows, the trade seems unaccompanied by any of the horrors of the same trade... on the Western coast of Africa." Some of these women he found "beautifully formed with fine expressive countenances." Several "tittered" and were "much amused" by his appearance. All seemed "well fed" with rice that was "clean and wholesome."³⁰

In his more sensitive moments, Roberts felt that a repellent brutality pervaded Egyptian society. Almost a month after returning to Cairo, he wrote:

In this accumulation of human suffering there appears to be no sympathy. In a country where all are slaves man seems to sink into a brute. Self-preservation is the rule of all and he who is highest oppresses all who are immediately under him and so on in succession. The lowest addresses his superior with the most abject humility whilst he rules those under him "with a rod of iron."³¹

The artist made no attempt to depict such relationships, but there are three slave scenes among the lithographs. The first, "Slave Boat on the

²⁸ "David Roberts to Christine from Alexandria, 24 Sept. 1838," in James Ballantine, *The Life of David Roberts R.A.* (Edinburgh, 1866), 81-82.

²⁹ "RJE," 29 Oct. 1838, 69; 14 Nov. 1838, 102; 15 Dec. 1838, 148-49.

³⁰ "RJE," 30 Sept. 1838, 18; 13 Dec. 1838, 143; 15 Dec. 1838, 148-49; 16 Dec. 1838, 152.

³¹ "RJE," 19 Jan. 1839, 182.

Nile" (*Egypt*, I, 4), is based on the sketch made at Asyūṭ; it shows female slaves huddled together in an open boat so far away that their faces are indistinct. The second, "Abyssinian Slaves at Korti" (*Egypt*, I, 27), gives a closer view of seven slaves and a slave-dealer; the former do not appear to be ill or mistreated, but the latter looks decidedly evil. The third, "A Group in the Slave Market in Cairo" (*Egypt*, III, 27), shows 15 female slaves and seven men. Two of the women are smiling and three are sleeping, and one of the men, evidently the dealer, has a sinister appearance. In none of these scenes are chains or iron collars or whips to be seen, nor do any of the slaves appear to be in great distress.

That women occupied a thoroughly debased position in Arab society was another component of the negative stereotype. It held that they were confined or concealed, were required to perform laborious tasks, and were regarded as sensual creatures who existed primarily to gratify the sexual appetites of men.

Roberts was impressed by evidence that seemed to corroborate some of these claims. Arab women "envelope themselves from head to foot," he wrote. At Asyūṭ, he watched young girls unloading heavy stones from a boat under the direction of supervisors who "use their sticks with moderation." Such "*womanual* labour," as he termed it, evoked no expression of sympathy; he commented simply that the girls were "of the finest forms. . . and. . . appear happy." Along the banks of the river he was struck by the posture of the young women; they were "exquisitely made, with no bend in their backs from the constant custom of carrying heavy loads on their heads they often remind one of the graceful models of the Greeks." At a large construction project back in Cairo, he observed hundreds of workers, "principally girls," carrying stones, earth, and mortar; the "taskmasters" there "use the whip most unsparingly." Now he was moved to write:

Wretched is the lot of the poor labourers. . . . How travellers can visit this country. . . without bestowing a thought on the misery and sad suffering around them is to me most extraordinary. . . . Look at the condition to which the fairer and lovelier portion of our race is here degraded— whilst this continues man must always be a stranger to every noble and tender feeling which can tend to humanize and ameliorate the mental and more heavenly part of our nature.³²

He attended performances by the famous *ghawazees* (female dancers), first at Thebes. "Much has been written of these girls. . . but nothing comes up to the real scene," he reported. However, his account made

³² "RJE," 26 Oct. 1838, 59; 14 Dec. 1838, 144; 16 Oct. 1838, 37; 19 Jan. 1839, 181-83.

no reference to the exposed breasts and lascivious movements that had captivated previous European travelers. Only three of the six were "good dancers," he thought; one was "elegant in person and equally graceful in her dancing with one of the most expressive countenances I ever beheld." Later in Cairo he made sketches of such dancers on two occasions, but then wrote: "I have become tired and disgusted with them."³³

His pictures certainly convey the impression that Arab women were subordinate. Their confinement is suggested by the fact that they appear in only 57 of the lithographs, less than a quarter of those that contain human figures, and in little more than a third of those in which facial features are clearly delineated. In the Egyptian scenes they are generally shown as veiled and fully shrouded in black.

A dozen pictures depict women filling pots with water or carrying them on their heads. Two show female goatherds. In three scenes women are preparing or serving food, and in 14 they are tending children. There are no views of women doing hard physical labor or suffering harsh treatment.

Nor does Roberts exploit the erotic theme so dear to French painters of Arab life. There is one decorously romantic scene, "Baalbec from the Fountain" (*Holy Land*, II, 1). It offers a vision of five women at leisure in an idyllic setting; two of them are playing stringed instruments as a peacock rests nearby. There are no bath or harem views. Moreover, the femininity of the enslaved women is not stressed. The figures in the slave boat are so indistinct and so positioned that their gender is not evident. The bodies of the women in the Cairo slave market are fully covered. The black slaves at Korti are naked from the waist up, but the effect is hardly titillating. There is a picture of two dancers, "The Ghawazees, or Dancing Girls of Cairo" (*Egypt*, III, 37), but their poses are not seductive. The breasts of one are partially revealed, but no bare legs or torsos are to be seen. Only one figure in all of the lithographs seems the least bit voluptuous, and that is a bare-breasted young African woman who stands with arms folded in "Fountain of the Virgin, Nazareth" (*Holy Land*, I, 28). Islam was presented in the stereotype of the Arabs as an altogether false religion which justified despotism, slavery, and the subjugation of women; fostered bigotry, superstition, and fanaticism; and obstructed progress.

Roberts gained little understanding or even knowledge of the tenets of Islam, but was able to observe its external features. Some of these, such as the muezzin's call and the manner of praying, he described matter-of-factly in his journal; but he could not resist a gibe when explaining how a

³³ "RJE," 22 Oct. 1838, 49; 29 Jan. 1839, 190.

³⁴ "RJE," 13 Dec. 1838, 142.

Muslim performed his ablutions, speculating that "the rest of his body probably had not touched water since he came into the world."³⁴

The artist was quite favorably impressed by the care Muslims devoted to the maintenance of their burial places; "a delightful sight to meet with in any country," he wrote, for "it proved the existence of the finest feelings."³⁵ He was most enthusiastic about some of the older structures that had been inspired by the Muslims' faith, especially the Sultan Hassan mosque in Cairo, remarking that he considered it "not surpassed in point of magnitude and the exquisite beauty of its arabesques by any building in existence, St. Peter's excepted."³⁶

Other aspects of Islam elicited negative comments. Contemporary Muslim art and architecture he deemed "most tawdry and contemptible." Funeral processions lacked the dignity which he considered appropriate, with pallbearers "jostling against each other... half-running... talking and screaming."³⁷ He was upset by "so much bigotry" when he was warned to depart forthwith from a mosque in Cairo after he had knelt to examine a covering that was being embroidered for the Prophet's tomb. "Had it been known," he wrote in the text for "Interior of the Mosque of the Sultan El Ghoree" (*Egypt*, III, 36), "that that sacred drapery had been polluted by the touch of an unbeliever—a dog of a Christian—and had I been caught it is horrid to reflect on what might have been my punishment."

He saw fanaticism in the celebration surrounding the departure of the caravan bearing the sacred cloth to Mecca. In his journal, he described the "remarkable antics" of the dervishes, some of whom were "in such a state of religious phrensy or delirium that the foam poured from their mouths"; others had thrust "iron skewers" through various parts of their bodies. A later encounter with a fellah stranded in Syria while attempting the pilgrimage to Mecca led Roberts to term the hajj "a fool's errand" and to add that "the infatuation which possesses every Mahomedan to perform this journey becomes almost a kind of insanity."³⁸

He considered Islam largely responsible for what seemed to him to be the degeneracy of the Middle East. Following his voyage to Upper Egypt, he told his daughter that his heart had "sickened" as he had observed the remains of once "splendid cities" that were now "deserted and lonely, or reduced by misgovernment and the barbarism of the Moslem creed, to a state as savage as the wild animals by which they are surrounded."³⁹ A month in Cairo led him to express the fervent hope that

³⁵ "RJE," 14 Dec. 1838, 146.

³⁶ "Letter from David Roberts, Cairo, 24 Dec. 1838," *Athenaeum*, no. 590 (1839): 133.

³⁷ "RJE," 6 Jan. 1839, 170; 13 Dec. 1838, 142.

³⁸ "RJE," 8 Jan. 1839, 173; "RJS," 13 March 1839, 72.

³⁹ "David Roberts to Christine from Cairo, 22 Dec. 1838," in Ballantine, 105.

"the days of the Moslem creed are rapidly drawing to a close," as other travelers had predicted, "for it is," he said, "indeed the religion of barbarism." By the time he reached Jerusalem, he was convinced that Islam was "fast hastening to its fall," and asserted that it "has invariably involved its followers in wretchedness and misery and seems as if allowed by the Almighty as a scourge." As he mused before the temple at Baalbec over the changes that had occurred there, he again focused on Islam, condemning it as "a creed that could bring the most fruitful and civilized portion of the globe into worse than barbarism."⁴⁰ These highly critical ideas found expression in the essay that introduced the Egyptian lithographs and, more subtly, in some of the texts.

However, there is no denigration of Islam in the pictures themselves except insofar as decaying mosques carry negative connotations.⁴¹ A Muslim funeral is portrayed as a rather sedate affair. Nothing in any of the lithographs suggests bigotry, superstition, or fanaticism. There are no views of the dervishes or other participants in the departure ceremony.

Indeed, several pictures convey favorable impressions of Islam. There are three mosque interiors (*Egypt*, III, 8, 20, and 36) which portray the worshipers listening attentively to the imam as he expounds the Qur'an, praying solemnly, conversing soberly, and generally behaving in a dignified and devout fashion. These figures evoke respect. The architecture itself, in both interior and exterior mosque scenes, evokes admiration, but for Muslims of an earlier era.

Taken together, it is clear that the Roberts lithographs do not provide an entirely accurate record of what Egypt and Syria were like in 1838-39. They offer instead a selective, simplified, and even distorted version of reality.

Partly this was due to the artist's failure to perceive some aspects of that reality or to be impressed by what he did see. Although he had a sharp eye for architectural detail, he lacked the skills of a trained cultural anthropologist. Moreover, he began his journey with little knowledge of the Middle East since its Islamization. He was blinded to some extent by preconceptions derived from *The Thousand and One Nights* and accounts by eighteenth and nineteenth-century travelers. The day he first entered Cairo, he exclaimed: "I found exactly what I had expected."⁴²

⁴⁰ "RJE," 19 Jan 1839, 182; "RJS," 12 April 1839, 119; 5 May 1839, 169.

⁴¹ On the meaning of ruins, see Bendiner, 68-70; Nochlin, 123. For a general discussion of how Islam was portrayed by European painters, see Malcolm Warner, "The Question of Faith: Orientalism, Christianity and Islam," in *The Orientalists*, ed. MaryAnne Stevens (London, 1984), 32-39.

⁴² "RJE," 30 Sept. 1838, 18.

His perception also suffered from the limited nature of his relations with Arabs. He was among them for only eight months, and during that period he was constantly on the move except for the six and a half weeks that he spent in Cairo. The only Arabs with whom he had extended contact were his employees, but the language barrier prevented much communication with them. He had fleeting encounters with officials, merchants, souvenir peddlers, beggars, peasants, and urban idlers. The only Arab with whom he developed a close friendship was Hanafee Ismail Effendi, a young Christian in the service of Muḥammad 'Alī who had been educated and converted in Britain and who served as interpreter on the Syrian trip. From him Roberts learned something about Arab customs and beliefs.

But among the features of the actual scene which do not appear in the pictures are several that were certainly perceived by Roberts and indeed impressed him greatly. A striking fact is that these omissions serve to reduce the extent to which his images of Arabs correspond to the negative stereotype of them that was to be embraced by the imperialist ideologues.

Some of these omissions resulted from Roberts's experiences on the spot. He was disinclined to portray the despotic aspects of Egyptian government because he was so favorably impressed by the cordial treatment accorded him by Muḥammad 'Alī and his subordinates; by the Pasha's accomplishments, particularly establishing a degree of order that enabled Roberts to travel throughout Egypt and Syria in relative safety; and by the Pasha's willingness to facilitate British communication with India across Egypt.

Some resulted from Roberts's religious values. His Calvinism was doubtless a factor in his disinclination to portray women in an erotic fashion and probably tempered his treatment of Islam which, although a false religion in his eyes, was at least strongly opposed to idolatry and glittering ceremony.

Some resulted from his artistic principles. His commitment to the Picturesque led him to exclude the harsher as well as the modernizing aspects of the reality he observed. His unsentimental portrayal of slaves has been interpreted as an expression of his inclination towards Realism.⁴³

Some resulted from the limitations of the medium that Roberts employed and of his own talents. It was difficult to represent in a drawing certain faults ascribed to the Arabs, particularly for one who was not highly skilled in portraiture. He repeatedly expressed regret over his inability to do justice to those he observed and wished that David Wilkie, an artist noted for his depiction of people, were present to record the scene.

⁴³ Bendiner, 73.

Moreover, it was difficult for him to draw individuals in a detailed and sensitive fashion because in some places they were unwilling to pose for him, and in others there was too much congestion and confusion. Often crowds of onlookers interfered with his work. After attempting to sketch in Asyūṭ, he complained of being "mobbed before, behind, on every side and even from above for the tops of the houses were lined with living, shouting, screaming beings."⁴⁴ Conditions in Cairo were similar. One episode he described in the text for "Bazaar in the Street Leading to the Mosque of El-Mooristan, Cairo" (*Egypt*, III, 24) as follows:

It [this bazaar] is crowded by such an endless throng, that to undertake to make a drawing there is disheartening, for you are not only liable to jostling and interruption, but the crowd, ignorant of what you are doing, are not so much disposed to interrupt you from curiosity as from hatred and dislike to a Frank, which they would willingly shew by gross offence, if they dared. Just as I had finished a drawing, a half-sucked orange was thrown from a window above, and struck my sketch-book out of my hand. . . .

At the festivities surrounding the departure of the caravan bearing the tapestry for the Prophet's tomb, he was not molested but was frustrated by the complexity, excitement, and rapidly changing nature of the scene. "I had my sketchbook," he wrote, "but there was so much to gaze on that I could do little."⁴⁵

A major explanation for the omissions is to be found in the motives behind Roberts's journey. One was a pure and simple curiosity that had been stimulated by his religious upbringing with its strong emphasis on Biblical stories and scenes, by his reading of *The Thousand and One Nights*, by his painting of the stage sets for a production of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" by a traveling company in 1816 and of Mozart's "The Seraglio" at Covent Garden ten years later, and by his exposure to the Moorish architecture of Spain and to the wonders of Morocco on a trip in 1832-33.

The journey was also prompted by a creative impulse. It was a quest for the stimulation and challenge of exotic subjects, new colors, and a different light that would enable Roberts to exercise his talent more fully and to produce works of the highest artistic quality for their own sake.

It was at the same time something like a scientific expedition, for he was also attracted to Egypt and Syria by a desire to make an accurate, detailed record of the architecture and historic sites to be found there. He understood that pictures of the Pharaonic monuments by earlier artists, particularly those published in the 22-volume *Description de l'Egypte*,

⁴⁴ "RJE," 13 Dec. 1838, 138.

⁴⁵ "RJE," 13 Jan. 1839, 178

were inadequate and indeed incorrect in some respects; and he knew that there were no drawings at all by Europeans of important Islamic monuments. Returning to Cairo with the sketches he had made up the Nile, he was convinced that they were "not only good but of the greatest interest independent of their being mere pictures," for he had found that the French work "conveys no idea of these splendid remains." As his drawing of that city's mosques proceeded with difficulty, he was buoyed by the belief that they too would have documentary value. "Well," he wrote, "so long as they add to the general knowledge already acquired of the various styles of architecture existing in different ages, . . . I am well satisfied."⁴⁶

A fourth and very important consideration that induced Roberts to set out for the Middle East was the belief that such an undertaking would be financially rewarding.⁴⁷ He realized that artists needed to work with fresh and novel subject matter to attract buyers. He also realized that there had developed among the British public a strong interest in Egypt and Syria, arising from a fascination with the ruins of ancient civilizations and Biblical sites, an appreciation of the growing economic and strategic importance of the area, an awareness that tourists might now safely venture there, a taste for opulent decoration, and a longing to escape in fantasy from the grimness and pressures of an industrialized society. There was therefore a strong demand for Middle Eastern views drawn accurately on the spot, to which he could respond. He expected to bring back sketches that would be the basis for enough paintings, water colors, and lithographs to keep him busy for years and to make his fortune.

Several passages in his journal and letters indicate that he had a canny eye for the commercial value of his enterprise. After completing his sketches of the Pharaonic monuments, he wrote: "I am the first artist at least from England that has yet been here and there is much in this. . . . We shall see what impression they make in England." As he turned to the mosques of Cairo, he claimed to be "about the first professional man who has sat down here to make a drawing."⁴⁸ He found the "far less known" Islamic architecture "extraordinary" and "not less beautiful in its way"; in fact, he told Hay, "the generality of people" might well "give it the preference."⁴⁹ As he prepared to depart for Syria, he wrote that he would re-

⁴⁶ "RJE," 20 Dec. 1838, 158; 1 Jan. 1839, 164-65.

⁴⁷ For discussion of this motive, see Reynolds, 391-93; Clayton, 4-5; Llewellyn, 73, 76; Patsy Campbell, "David Roberts the Painter," in *Artist Adventurer: David Roberts 1796-1864* (Scottish Arts Council, 1981), 7; Caroline Bugler, "'Innocents Abroad': Nineteenth Century Artists and Travellers in the Near East and North Africa," in Stevens, 27.

⁴⁸ "RJE," 20 Dec. 1838, 158-59; 2 Jan. 1839, 165.

⁴⁹ David Roberts to D. R. Hay, 4 Jan. 1839, NLS, MSS 2255, f. 88.

⁵⁰ "RJE," 29 Jan. 1839, 189-90.

turn home from there "with one of the richest folios that ever left the East" and added: "It is worth the hazard."⁵⁰

To score a commercial success, Roberts had to produce pictures that would sell. Accordingly, he had to bear in mind the beliefs, expectations, desires, and tastes of British viewers, both critics and potential buyers. His scenes must be appealing, and this need was certainly a major reason for some of the disparity between what he observed and what he depicted. To some extent his portrayal of Arabs was shaped by the images of them which already prevailed in Britain. Moreover, he chose not to include in his scenes elements that would be distressing, depressing, or threatening. In the interest of marketability he sanitized reality, de-emphasizing or excising its harsh, ugly, repugnant aspects—such as oppression, poverty, filth, decay, disease, robbery, hard physical labor, and brutality—which might make contemplation of the scene less pleasurable or interfere with the viewer's "escape" to a romantic, relaxed, and exotic Orient.⁵¹

There is no evidence to indicate that a political motive was at work in Roberts's representation of Arabs, leading him to produce deliberately images that would generate support for imperialism. Of course, the possibility that such an intention was present but unexpressed cannot be dismissed. If so, it was clearly subordinate to and overridden by artistic and commercial motives, as well as by judgments derived from his experiences on the spot, which led him to exclude several aspects of what he saw that were consonant with imperialist ideology, as explained above, and to include a few that were not, such as a benevolent ruler, presentable slaves, and respectable Muslim worshipers.

Moreover, his decision to include features stressed by the "Orientalists" can be attributed to factors other than political motivation. The emphasis on the difference between "them" and "us" and on their backwardness was due to marketability calculations and specifically the demand for exotic scenes. The portrayal of Arabs more often as stock types than as individualized human beings was due to the nature of Roberts's artistic skills and priorities. The infrequent representation of Egyptian women was due to the limited contribution that their dismal dress could make to an attractive picture. The depiction of ruins and groups of idlers was in accord with the conventions of the picturesque style. Moreover, if people were shown hard at work rather than as passive accessories, they might distract the spectator's attention from the main focus of the picture which was typically architectural. Of course, the lithographs could have

⁵¹ For a discussion of the qualities that Victorians found appealing in Egyptian scenes by various artists, see Briony Llewellyn, "The Victorian Vision of Egypt," in *The Inspiration of Egypt: Its Influence on British Artists, Travellers and Designers 1700-1900*, ed. Patrick Connor (Brighton, 1983), 118-19.

political implications in the absence of a political purpose. The extent to which that was actually the case for Victorians, as opposed to those who have been stimulated by Edward Said, is indeterminable. No doubt, many nineteenth-century viewers saw them simply as pretty or interesting scenes and picked up no political message, at least on the conscious level. Moreover, the image of the Arabs which they convey is somewhat ambiguous and does not correspond exactly to the "Orientalist" version. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to conclude that the effect of Roberts's prints, on balance, was probably to render many of those among his compatriots who came to "know" the Middle East through them more inclined to accept than to reject the ideological justification for British imperialism there that was to be offered by Cromer, Milner, and Balfour.

*Department of Political Science
Davidson College
Davidson, North Carolina*

J. HARRIS PROCTOR



IN THE PRESENCE OF THE MARTYRS: THE *Ālam* IN POPULAR SHĪʿĪ PIETY

The central orienting event of Shīʿī religious belief is the martyrdom of Ḥusayn, the grandson of Prophet Muḥammad.¹ Although this event took place more than thirteen hundred years ago, it remains a living and present tragedy for Shīʿī men and women today. As Peter Chelkowski rightly points out, for the believer the martyrdom has "transcended history to become metahistory, having acquired cosmic proportions. This places the 'Āshūrā' passion of the imam Ḥusayn at a time that is 'no time' and in a space that is 'no space'."² In other words, the events of Karbalā' are readily accessible to modern believers who not only see and react to the tragedy in the present tense, but also make sense of their own lives in its reflected light.³ Mohammed Fazel conveys this well in his recounting of his childhood in Bombay, particularly his participation in the Muḥarram re-enactment of the passion of Ḥusayn, otherwise known as the *tāziya*:

The drums and cymbals, Zuljenah's neighing, an occasional glimpse of Shimr and the women screaming and squirming in upstairs classroom windows like nestling crows at feeding time, would transport me to what can best be described as an altered state of consciousness. As the *tāziya* grip tightened on my being, so did the toll of the *zanjīr* [flail] on my back. One could easily latch onto a particular wail from the storm of sorrow pelting us from the upstairs classrooms. The heavier my flagellation, the louder the wail. I was both grieving and the object of grief. . . . The *tāziya* was a crucible where Hussain's

¹ Cf. Gustav von Grunebaum's comment: "It would be incorrect to say that Husain stands in the centre of Shīʿī dogma, but it is unquestionably true that contemplation of his personality and fate is the emotional mainspring of the believers' religious experience. The principal and most characteristic festival of the Shīʿa is built around his death, which has made him, in the phrase of an early mourner, 'the bond of reconciliation with God on the Day of Judgement.'" G. E. von Grunebaum, *Muhammadan Festivals*, rpt. (1951; London: Curzon Press, 1981), 87.

² Peter Chelkowski, "Āshūrā" in *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World* (henceforth *Oxford Encyclopaedia*), editor-in-chief John Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), I, 141. Mahmud Ayoub puts it this way: "Every Muḥarram becomes the month of the tragedy of Karbalā' and every 'Āshūrā' the day of the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn." Mahmud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam. A Study of the Devotional Aspects of 'Āshūrā' in Twelver Shīʿism* (The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton Publications, 1978), 149.

³ There are many sources describing the events of the martyrdom of Ḥusayn and his followers. See among others, Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*; Sayyid Muḥammad Rizvi, ed. *Imām Ḥusayn: The Savior of Islam* (Richmond, Canada, n.p., 1984), especially the extract reproduced from Shaykh al-Mufīd's *Kitābu al-Irshād*, translated by I. K. A. Howard.

monumental sorrow and my existential trappings coalesced. My suffering paled against Hussain's cataclysmic tragedy. . . .⁴

This article deals with Shī'ī ritual and belief with a special focus on one of its central icons,⁵ the *alam* (pl. *ālām*),⁶ literally a "signpost" or "flag."⁷ Peter Chelkowski observes that the *alam* is universally revered, being the most important object carried in Muḥarram ritual processions world-wide.⁸ Conceived as a replica of the battle standard of Ḥusayn, an *alam* usually represents one of the martyrs of Karbalā', some member of the family of the Prophet, or one of the twelve *imāms* (spiritual leaders). In India, these distinctive pieces are an important presence in Shī'ī shrines or homes,⁹ as well as being a component of ritualized practice including processions (*jalūs*) and assemblies (*majālis*) commemorating the martyrdom of Ḥusayn and his followers. While there exists some tension in the Shī'ī community lest these sacred objects be deified, there is a sense in which they transcend the boundary of mere symbolism to become an empowering presence for the community of believers.

⁴ Mohammed K. Fazel, "The Politics of Passion: Growing up Shia," *Iranian Studies*, 21: nos. 3-4 (1988), 46. Note that Chelkowski's observation that the *ta'ziya* drama is unknown in India is not precisely true; see Chelkowski, "Āshūrā," 141-43. Although perhaps assuming a different form from the Iranian variety, the *ta'ziya* was clearly—at least for some Indian Muslims—an important part of the observance of Muḥarram. For a brief description of "Pitna Dalna" as it is called in Rajasthan see, Hashmia Kamil, "Karbala and the People of India" in *Red Sand*, ed. Mehdi Nazmi (New Delhi: Abu Talib Academy, 1984), 157-65. For an account of nineteenth century *ta'ziya* enactments in Lucknow, see John J. Pool, *Studies in Mohammedanism* (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co., 1892), 89-96. Brief mention of the *ta'ziya* performance is also made by Abdul Halim Sharar (1860-1926) in *Lucknow. The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, trans. and ed. E. S. Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain (1875; Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 216 and *passim*. I have yet to verify whether or not the *ta'ziya* is still performed in either Bombay or Lucknow. Hyderabad does not, at least to my knowledge, have either a history or a contemporary practice of this drama.

⁵ The other main Shī'ī icon is the *ta'ziya* or *zarīb*—a replica of the tomb of either Ḥusayn or one of the martyrs, *Imāms* or members of the family of the Prophet.

⁶ To ease confusion for English readers of this article I will use the word "*ālams*" to designate the plural.

⁷ The literal definition is from J. David-Weill, "*Ālam*" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. H. A. R. Gibb, *et. al.*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 1:349. This entry is written from a historical focus and, interestingly, makes no reference to the *alam* as a component of Shī'ī ritual.

⁸ Peter Chelkowski in *Alserat, Imam Ḥusayn Conference Number*, 12: no. 1 (Spring, 1986): 209-226; quoted in *Shī'ism: Doctrines, Thought and Spirituality*, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hamid Dabashi, and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 265.

⁹ In the Deccan, the Qutb Shahi kings (rulers of the empire of Golconda/Hyderabad, 1512-1687) even incorporated the symbol of the *alam* into the facade of mosques and other buildings and monuments. See M. Abdulla Chughtai, "The Deccan's Contribution to Indian Culture, *Islamic Culture*, 10, no. 1 (Jan. 1936): 59.

Origins of the Tradition

In tracing the origins of the word *Ālam*, J. David-Weill points out that in Arabia before the time of the Prophet, a white cloth attached to a lance would function as a symbol of the Quraysh tribe while on the battlefield. During the Prophet Muḥammad's time, such flags representing tribes or groups were known by several names including *Ālam*.¹⁰ Their chief purpose seems to have been martial, providing both identification of a given group during times of war and, perhaps, a psychological rallying point for the warriors. Generally also the fall of a flag was the signal of defeat.¹¹ Tradition suggests that ʿAlī carried the flag of the Prophet during battle; a generation later, ʿAbbās, the half-brother of Ḥusayn, carried the battle standard during the fight against Yazīd.

Although originally the word *Ālam* referred to the flag of a particular group, significant meaning also seems to have been given to the emblematic crest which either topped the pole to which the flag was attached or was borne on a separate pole. Whether or not it was a battle standard with an emblematic crest or a flag borne on a staff which was carried by ʿAbbās at Karbalāʾ, centuries later it is the crest rather than the flag itself which is primarily identified with Ḥusayn and his followers.¹² Today in South India, for example, the word *Ālam* designates what is usually a metalwork crest decorated with calligraphy or other embellishments and displayed on a supporting pole.¹³ The most popular design is the raised palm called a *panjatan* which symbolizes the five members of the *ahl al-bayt*, the holy family of the Prophet: Muḥammad, Fāṭima, ʿAlī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. Hang-

¹⁰ David-Weill, *E.I.*, I: 349.

¹¹ See the entry "Flag" in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1993), 811-12.

¹² I have not been able to determine whether the *Ālam* carried by ʿAbbās was a metal emblem, a cloth flag, or a combination of both. In describing the origins of flags, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* suggests that they were invented by either ancient Chinese or Indian civilizations, although they may have had "a common origin in the standards of ancient Egypt and Assyria (standards, in this sense, meaning solid objects, such as metal animals, attached atop poles). . . ." (*ibid.*, 811). Because of the popularity of *Ālam*, most Hyderabad Shīʿas would agree that a metal standard was carried by ʿAbbās. In fact, the actual standard is believed to be enshrined in an *Āshūrkhāna* in Lucknow. For details of this relic and rituals associated with it see Mrs. Meer Hassan ʿAlī, *Observations on the Mussulmans of India*, 2 vols. (London: Parbury, Allen & Co., 1832), I: 35ff. Interestingly, in Hassan Ali's observations of 19th century Lucknow, she refers to the Muḥarram "banners of Hosein," describing both the flag and crest as important parts of the symbol. See *ibid.*, I: 38, 48, etc. John N. Hollister similarly notes that "the term *Ālam* is used for the crest and the standard [i.e. the staff], or for the standard alone, to which streamers and pennants may or may not be attached." John Norman Hollister, *The Shīʿa of India* (London: Luzac and Co., 1953), 168-69. It is possible, then, that the locus of meaning has evolved—from flag to crest—over time. It is also possible that this aspect of popular practice differs from Lucknow to Hyderabad.

¹³ For a detailed description of the different parts of an *Ālam*, see Sadiq Naqvi, *Qutb Shāhī Āshūr Khānās of Hyderabad City* (Hyderabad: Bab-ul-Ilm Society, 1982), 12-15.

ing from the base of the *ʿalam* is usually a *dhatti*, a rectangular length of cloth which is draped to cover the staff. The *dhatti* can be of simple material or fine, highly embellished cloth including brocade and silk; it is sometimes embroidered with the names of the panjatan, the martyrs, or verses from the Qurʾān.¹⁴ At times it looks almost like a cloak, and when combined with the shining emblem of the *ʿalam* and garlands of jasmine and roses, the effect is regal. Shebhaz Safrani, who devotes a chapter to *ʿāḡām* of the Quli Qutb Shah period (1512-1687) in his edited book on Hyderabad and Golconda, describes the allure of the "shimmering standards":

Metaphysical to the faithful, overwhelming to zealots, simply moving to the poetic, the Qutb Shahi *alums* have a transcendent power that is still awesome. It is an experience to see them being raised before and lowered after Muḥarram. . . The calligraphy, shaped to take the fullest advantage of the Arabic words Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain, has circular bases with hollow ends for wooden staffs [sic.]. It is this calligraphic transmission, the polished metal, the *alums* decked with flowers that ordinarily adorn the necks of the living—that creates an impact.¹⁵

Safrani commits a common error in stating that *ʿāḡām* are never left on perennial display, being installed on the 1st of Muḥarram and then put away on the 10th. Although this is true for a number of *ʿāḡām*, it is certainly not universally true. Both in main public *Āshūrkhānas* (structures housing *ʿāḡām* and other sacred objects)¹⁶ and in private homes, some *ʿāḡām* are on view all year round; others for at least a forty-day mourning period. One Shīʿi woman explained to me her own reasons for keeping the family's *ʿāḡām* on display throughout the year: "Yazīd succeeded once in lowering the *ʿalam* of Ḥusayn. Why should we allow him a larger victory by lowering and putting them away each year?"¹⁷ Another woman, a popu-

¹⁴ In Kashmir it is sometimes referred to as a "*dupatta*," the veil which Indian women drape across their shoulders. See Zohra Khatoon's description of the Muḥarram rituals at the tomb of Pir Mitha in her book, *Muslim Saints and Their Shrines* (Jammu: Jaykay Book House, 1990), 23 ff.

¹⁵ Shebhaz H. Safrani, "Golconda Alums—Shimmering Standards" in *idem*, ed. *Golconda and Hyderabad* (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1992), 77.

¹⁶ Literally, "the house of ʿĀshūrā," the tenth of Muḥarram and the day on which Ḥusayn was martyred. These structures are sometimes referred to as a *bargah*, *yadgar*, *alaya* or *dargah*. In North India the more common term is *Imāmbārgah* (lit. "enclosure of the Imām"), while elsewhere in the world it is known by different names including *usayniyah* (Iran, Iraq, Lebanon), *takiyah* (Iran), and *maʿām* (Bahrain, Oman). For a general discussion of these structures, focusing primarily on the Iranian context, see Gustav Thalass, "*usayniyah*" in *Oxford Encyclopaedia*, II: 153-55.

¹⁷ Personal conversation with Mrs. Rabap Patel, Hyderabad, June 1995. I would like to take this occasion to thank Hyderabad's Shīʿi community which has been graciously open to an outsider in their midst. I would like to particularly acknowledge a debt of gratitude to Mrs. Rabap Patel who gave so much in friendship, and left many bereft by her passing in October 1995.

lar *dhākira* (female orator), pointed out that *ʿāḷām* which are dedicated to the twelfth Imām are always kept on perennial display since Shīʿas believe that this final guide is not dead but in occultation. "It makes us feel nice to go and see the *Ālam*. It is a reminder for us that he is with us."¹⁸ I myself have seen *ʿāḷām* dedicated to Zaynab, Sakīna, Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn and Ḥusayn displayed reverently in ʿĀshūrkhānas kept open not only during Muḥarram but throughout the year.¹⁹ If restricting the use of *ʿāḷām* to the first ten days of Muḥarram was once the norm (as some writers suggest), the practice has certainly evolved and changed, the rituals being renewed and reshaped by those for whom they have meaning. Thus, as Peter Chelkowski observes, many mourning practices are still growing and evolving in different Shīʿī communities around the world.²⁰

ʿĀshūrkhānas and the Keeping of *Ālāms*

When the south Indian city of Hyderabad was founded a little more than four hundred years ago,²¹ one of its early important constructions was a hospital known today as Dar al-Shifa. Although the days of patients conferring with doctors are long over, one can still get a feel of graceful planning from within its vast and imposing inner courtyard. Two stories high and nearly half a city block in length, the structure continues to be put to good use housing, among other things, a library, a *madrasa* (religious school), and a few families. It also functions as a central meeting place for Hyderabad's Shīʿī community, its sprawling courtyard being packed with men, women and children during various important days in the annual cycle of remembrance.

In a corner of the courtyard, a gate opens onto a smaller enclosed space containing an inner ʿĀshūrkhāna. Leaving one's shoes behind, one enters to find a vivid tapestry of the *Kaʿba* at Makka and, standing before it, the *Ālam* of Zaynab, the daughter of Ḥusayn. Photographs of the tombs of martyrs hang on the walls and two tomb replicas (*ẓarih*)²² are displayed on wooden stands to one side. The *Ālam* itself consists of a highly decorated metal crest with fine calligraphy which stands about five feet

¹⁸ Conversation with Dr. Zakia Sultana, Hyderabad, 18 March 1996.

¹⁹ Here I am speaking of three ʿĀshūrkhānas in the Dar al-Shifa complex and *Yadgar Ḥusaynī*—all in the Old City area of Hyderabad.

²⁰ Chelkowski, "*Āshūrā*," 142.

²¹ A city of nearly five million, Hyderabad is divided into the old city area south of the Musi River, and the new city region which includes the former British cantonment town of Secunderabad. The architecture and ambiance of the old city reflects its history of nearly four centuries of Muslim rule, although the present population (approximately one third of the metropolitan population) is divided more or less equally between Muslims and Hindus.

²² In Shīʿī rituals, these tombs are, like *ʿāḷām*, a common, uniting and highly revered symbol. Their name varies locally; in North India they are known as *taʿziyas*.

high, being mounted on a tall wooden pole fixed to a low stool (*chowkhi*). The crest, however, remains obscured behind a black veil which keeps it respectfully in *pardah* (lit. behind a curtain) for, as one woman devotee explained with an approving nod, "She is a woman."

An 'Āshūrkhāna can be anything from a lavishly designed building of grand proportions to a shelf in a cupboard or a temporarily transformed storeroom in one's house. The main purpose is to provide a space—temporary or permanent—to house sacred relics, primarily *'a'lam* or *zarihs* (tomb replicas). The room which houses the *'alam* is considered sacred space, a designation which has particular significance for women. Just as most menstruating or post-partum women will not touch the Qur'ān or even recite its words until they are again in a "clean" period, so also women refrain from touching an *'alam*—or even entering the room in which *'a'lam* are kept—during cycles when their body emits what is considered impure blood.²³ This is part of the reason that the women I talked with say it is hard to keep *'a'lam*. One woman in her sixties, now living in Canada with her daughter, had come back to Hyderabad to be with her son and his family for the season of Muḥarram. Speaking of Shī'ī faith and practice in the Toronto area she noted, "It is difficult these days for everyone to keep *'a'lam*. You can't touch them during your menses—how can you keep them or take care of them?"²⁴

For the believer, caring for these sacred symbols is a serious business requiring one not only to keep them clean—physically and ritually—but to perform a *majlis* for the personality to whom they are dedicated. The practice of lighting incense and candles and of saying special prayers can also be part of the keeping of *'a'lam*, at least during the main mourning months of Muḥarram, Safar and the first few days of Rabī' al-Awwal. Dr. Zakia Sultana, a retired university professor and a highly respected dhākira (orator for majālis and other assemblies) identifies other factors which make it difficult for people to keep *'a'lam* in their homes.

People are just as devout as they have always been, the religious feeling is strong, and people are generous. But they are so busy these days, it's hard to keep it up. Besides, there are so many big 'Āshūrkhānas coming up, people can go there. For many it's easier.

She notes that the practice of home 'Āshūrkhānas is dying out, partly because of shortages of space. "*'Alams* should really have their own room. But these days, with modern flats, who can spare a separate room for a shrine?" Another difficulty springs from the changes taking place in the

²³ This designation of impurity contrasts with, for example, the blood of martyrs or even blood shed by male devotees in the remembrance of Ḥusayn's martyrdom.

²⁴ Conversation with Mrs. Fatima Samiuddin Mohamed, 20 June 1995.

family. One young woman, recently awarded her doctorate for her work on Shīʿī lamentation poetry, put it this way: "Before women used to be at home. Their only job was taking care of the home, of the family. Now so many are working. How can they find the time to do these things?"²⁵ Also important is the shrinking size of families, the breaking up of the joint family system, and a high emigration rate, all of which mean that there are fewer people with time to care for the *Āshūrkhāna* or to organize and prepare a majlis which honours the martyrs represented by the *ʿālam*.²⁶ One full-time housewife, a devout Shīʿa with four teen-aged children shook her head when I asked if she kept *ʿālam* at home. "We don't have our own *ʿālam*. You must be so careful. Keeping them is a lot of work."²⁷

Veneration in the Context of the Majlis

The *Ālam*, like other revered icons including the *zarīh*, *tabūt* (coffin) and *jūlah* (cradle), is not merely a stationary object to be passively viewed, touched or venerated, it also occupies a performative role in Shīʿī rituals like the majlis and jalūs. Here, due to constraints of time and space, I will focus solely on the context of the Muḥarram majlis.²⁸ Each majlis has its own form and style which differs not only from place to place—for example, Lucknow being different from Hyderabad or Tehran from Port-of-Spain—but also from majlis to majlis. This variation reflects differences in individual preferences, the martyr to whom the *Ālam* is dedicated, ritual histories in a given family or shrine, the time which is available for performance, and many other factors. What I describe, then, can only suggest the bare outlines of what is a truly rich and meaning-filled ritual.

As I have already mentioned, *ʿālam* kept by a family in their home are always somehow set apart, being displayed either in a room kept strictly or temporarily for that purpose or, if space does not permit, in a cupboard or on a shelf. If possible, the *Ālam* should be kept so that when one sits in

²⁵ Dr. Riaz Fatima, Hyderabad, 18 March 1996.

²⁶ What constitutes a successful majlis has its own definitions and can be the subject of a separate paper. For some description of women's majālis in the Pakistani context see Mary Hegland's articles including: "A Mixed Blessing: The Majles—Shi'a Women's Rituals of Mourning in North-West Pakistan" in *Mixed Blessings: Religious Fundamentalisms and Gender Cross-Culturally*, eds. Judy Brink and Joan Mencher (New York: Routledge, 1995); and "Shi'a Women of Northwest Pakistan and Agency through Practice: Ritual, Resistance, Resilience," *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 18, no. 2 (Nov. 1995): 65-79.

²⁷ Conversation with Tasneem Husayn, Hyderabad, 12 June 1995. I suspect that many of the issues raised here in the context of home *Āshūrkhānas* are common to the keeping of a *puja* room in modern Hindu homes, and, to a lesser extent, the keeping of a chapel or altar among Christians.

²⁸ Known in other parts of the Shīʿī world as *rawa-khwān*, after the famous recounting of the martyrdom event, *Rawat al-Shuhadāʾ*, written by Husayn Waʿīz Kashifi in 1501.

front of it, one is facing the direction of Makka. Most Āshūrkhāna buildings which are constructed to house *ʿaḷām* are aligned in this way.

As described earlier, the *ʿaḷām* is usually made of metal,²⁹ and when it has been installed (i.e. when it has been ceremoniously taken out of storage), it is displayed upright on a staff. Strings of jasmine and roses are often tied to the crest in a traditional gesture of respect; these are sometimes so numerous that they totally obscure the emblem's well-polished surface. Before a majlis begins, it is not unusual for people to first visit the *ʿaḷām* or *ʿaḷām*. Some men or women kiss the draped flowers or the *ʿaḷām* itself, many touch the crest or the *dhattīn* in a gesture of receiving blessing, most stand for at least a moment in silent prayer or empathic sadness or weeping. Those who have not visited the *ʿaḷām* before the majlis begins will sometimes stop for a brief or long visit after the assembly is over.

On the death anniversary of the martyr to which a given *ʿaḷām* is dedicated (or sometimes on a day different from the actual historical date), the *ʿaḷām* becomes a key symbol in recalling the event. At the majlis, following a passionate oration (*dhikr*) of the tragedy, the *ʿaḷām* is "brought out" before the bereft assembly, processed around a given circuit and then ceremoniously laid down, usually completely covered by a shroud. If the shroud is white, there are also often flecks of red on the cloth to symbolize the blood of the martyr. This presentation of the *ʿaḷām* occurs during the reciting of dirges (*nawas*), the cadence of which is kept by the rhythmic beating of the chest (*matam*), conveying the mourner's grief, empathy and solidarity with the suffering of the beloved martyr. The sanctity of the moment is often heightened by the burning of incense; in fact, it is sometimes around a smoking incense pot that the *ʿaḷām* are processed.³⁰ Arms stretch out to touch the sacred symbol; if the majlis is crowded, people may surge forward, pushing to try to reach the *ʿaḷām* and to gain, perhaps, a measure of blessing (*baraka*) through this action of love and respect. For many participants, the moment is deeply profound as, immersed in the tragedy, he or she beholds the symbol of the victim who is slain. For some, the symbol dies away, being transformed into the body of Ḥusayn or ʿAbbās or one of the other victims of the Karbalāʾ tragedy.

²⁹ This may vary. I have heard that in certain villages in rural Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad being the capital) *ʿaḷām* are made of palm leaf, although this may be in imitation of the *nakh* (date palm) representation of the bier of Husayn. See Chelkowski, *Alserat*, 265. Certainly a diversity of form and materials in the manufacture of *ʿaḷām* would not be unexpected in the larger context of Shīʿi communities worldwide.

³⁰ Nineteenth and early twentieth century sources describe fire pits, or "Muḥarrām fires" as a popular ritual presence during the days of mourning. Some mention has also been made of processing the icons around roaring blazes or merely "a night-light floating at the bottom of an earthen pot or basin sunk in the ground." G. C. M. Birdwood, quoted by Hollister, *The Shīʿa*, 167-68. I am not aware of the fire pit being a very popular practice presently, at least in Hyderabad. It is possible that the incense pot and the central locus it sometimes occupies in present rituals is a hold-over from former practices.

When I think of this transformative experience, I recall one black-clad woman, a grandmother, who at a majlis to mark the death of Ḥusayn's young daughter Sakīna had the privilege of holding this particular family *Ālam*. Standing with the symbol of the young child before her, she leaned her forehead against the glinting metal as tears coursed unchecked down her cheeks, her body swaying with grief. A woman deeply moved, she was totally lost in the moment. All around her, the tragedy of Sakīna's passing was evoked through the carefully crafted words of a moving nawa, punctuated only by the sharp slap of the matam and the sobs and cries of the faithful. Moments like this are profoundly intimate, deeply personal and almost impossible to penetrate or communicate. A non-believer, worse yet someone who has never witnessed a majlis, will find it difficult to visualize or to grasp. Once again, perhaps, Mohammed Fazel's words can help us capture what can be, for the believer, a truly transformative experience:

Suddenly, the doors would be flung open. Instantaneously, the drum and the cymbals would begin their dirge. And Imam Hussain, in a blood-smeared shroud, astride his steed Zuljenah would enter. For the crowd, there was no building up to a climax. The instant Hussain appeared, frenzy spread. We would slap our chests with open hands and slash our backs with the *zanjir*, chanting *Vai Hussain kushte shod*—Woe betide, Hussain is slaughtered. . .

. . . In the heat of the *Taziya* experience, amidst the mass of fellow mourners, ego boundaries would give and merge with others. Suddenly, the feeling was of being a bird in a flock. The motley became a pulsating organic whole. Suffering became a collective experience and pain the patter of raindrops on a shared roof.³¹

Although the context is different—here the Bombay *taʿziya* enactment, with the martyr Ḥusayn symbolized by a living actor rather than a metal emblem—the feeling of immediacy and consuming grief is the same. Note Fazel's identification: "the instant Hussain appeared. . .", not "the instant the actor portraying Hussain appeared. . ." While this might be dismissed as merely literary style, I would argue that Fazel is accurately communicating his own experience at the time. For him and for others, it *was* Ḥusayn who appeared blood-smeared and weary, just as, for the grandmother described above, it *was* the body of Sakīna whom she held in her trembling arms.

Following the remembrance of the death of the martyr, the *Ālam* is then usually kept for a forty-day period (sometimes three days) which is thought to coincide with the forty days which elapsed between the death

³¹ Fazel, "Politics of Passion," 45, 46.

of the Karbalā' martyrs and their burial. On the fortieth day (*Chellum* or *Arba'in*) the *'a'lam* are ritually "buried" by being wrapped in a final burial shroud or ceremoniously immersed in water.³² For some, this ritual has transformative associations which are conveyed by the popular expression "*thanda karna*", that is, to make [the *'alam*] "cold." This reflects a controversial belief—borrowed from Hindu practice—in the "heatedness" of the *'alam* during the period when it is installed, and the necessity of cooling it before it is retired.³³

The Fine Line between Veneration and Deification

When I once asked an educated and forthright friend whether the *'alam* in her home had any special personality associated with it, she gave me a long level look before warning me against such an inquiry, "You know we must be cautious about this; there is a danger for us here. These are simply symbols." I felt embarrassed and chastised, but accepted her implicit caveat that charges of "idol worship" can and have been leveled against many Shī'ī ritual practices. My friend's warning was certainly not the only one I heard while doing this research. Time and again, particularly among educated Shī'as, I encountered a hesitancy to discuss the details of belief and practice involving *'a'lam*. People are generally quite sensitive about the fine line separating the veneration of a symbolic object and the worship of a power-filled one, the latter being uncomfortably close to the Hindu practice of idol worship.³⁴

Indeed, to the uneducated observer, the kind of veneration given to *'a'lam* can be misleading, for it sometimes can appear that a believer is actually worshipping an idol, an idea which horrifies most Shī'as. This is particularly so when the practice is combined with the making of vows, the tangible reminders of which include the keeping of locks, the tying of strings, even the receiving of a special *dupatta* (veil). Yet at the very heart

³² Most descriptions of Muḥarram ritual recount the "burial" of icons (at least those which are temporarily constructed) in land which has been designated "Karbalā'." See, for example, Elizabeth Warnock Fernea's chapter on "Muḥarram" in *Guests of the Sheikh: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village*, rpt. (1965; New York: Doubleday, 1989). In Bombay, Lewis Pelly describes the immersion of icons in the sea; Colonel Sir Lewis Pelly, *The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain* (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1879), xvii-xxiv. Here in Hyderabad, I have not witnessed the procession of *'a'lam* to a graveyard "Karbalā'"; as far as I am aware, the river Musi is used for this purpose. However, the "burial" of many of the *'alam* is enacted within the shrine or home without recourse to an external grave representation.

³³ Cf. Hindu notions and terminology, as well as popular mystical references to *jamali* and *jilali* qualities of God or saints.

³⁴ In my reporting of conversation on this topic, I have deliberately preserved anonymity. The conversations reported took place in Hyderabad in 1995 and 1996.

of these ritual manifestations stand love and respect for the family of the Prophet. Mary Hegland describes it this way:

Relationships with the *ahl al-bayt* are intense and highly personal. Time and space are eliminated as believers think of the *ahl al-bayt* as their own brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters. In sharing their sorrows through intense repetitious interaction and demonstrations of loyalty, believers become related to them and thus expect their consideration.³⁵

Hence in Hyderabad, at one famous *Ālam* dedicated to Sakīna, women leave gifts of earrings, recalling with empathy the four year old child's pain, blood and suffering as the ornaments were ruthlessly torn from her ears.

The concern to refrain from crossing the fine line between ritual and idolatry is a particularly Muslim preoccupation and is not shared by Hindus who take part in Muḥarram events.³⁶ In his classic study of Shīʿism in the Indian context, John Hollister cites the following report of Hindu participation from a 1940 edition of one of India's daily newspapers:

A correspondent to *The Statesman*, Calcutta, writing from south India (probably the Deccan), states that Hindus from all castes, excepting Brahmans, call the *Ālams* and have incorporated them into their religion. The *Ālam* of 'Alī is called *Lal Sahib* and the other two are known as riders, "Vendi Sowar (Silver Rider), Ankus Sowar and Tangalur Sowar." The origin of these names is uncertain, but these three *Ālams* are "looked upon and treated with the same reverences as the village Goddesses."³⁷

M. L. Nigam, in his essay on Indian 'Āshūrkhānas, adds further color to the description of Hindu observances of Muḥarram, explaining the reasons certain rituals gained popularity:

The offerings of *agar* [incense] and flowers, distributing alms to the poor (*lungur*), the reading of emotional verses, *marsiyyas*, in honour

³⁵ Mary Elaine Hegland, "Ahl al-Bayt" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia*, I: 52.

³⁶ That Hindus (and Sunnis) participate and even sometimes take the lead in some Muḥarram activities is a well documented fact. See, for example, the comments and descriptions of Sadiq Naqvi, "The Socio-Cultural Impact of Karbala" in *Red Sand*, ed. Mehdi Nazmi (New Delhi: Abu Taleb Academy, 1984), 219-220 and *passim*; Andreas D'Souza, "Love of the Prophet's Family: The Role of Marāthīn in the Devotional Life of Hyderabadī Shīʿas," *The Bulletin of Henry Martyn Institute* 12, nos. 3-4 (1993): 31-47; and Rahī Māsoom Razā's semi-autobiographical novel *Adhā Gāun*, analyzed in depth by Roger Hooker in "Rahī Māsoom Razā's 'Half the Village,'" *The Bulletin of Henry Martyn Institute* 13, nos. 3-4 (1994): 19-43.

³⁷ Hollister, *The Shīʿa*, 179. Much more work has since been done on the Hindu observance of Muḥarram by a team of professors in Telugu and Central Universities, Hyderabad. Unfortunately, I am unaware of published sources for their research.

of Husain, and *nazar* to help the maintenance of the shrine echoed the similar ceremonies held inside a Hindu temple. The *udī* or ash, applied on the forehead by the devotees, reminds us of the *vibhuti* of Hindu temples. The offerings of rice, jaggery and coconut to *alams* is again a typical Hindu custom, popularly known as *prasadam* in temples. The *alam* which contains the relics of Husain,³⁸ was not a new phenomenon to the Hindus. The placing of personal relics of the Jain, Buddhist and Hindu saints inside the religious shrines had been an ancient practice in south India. The *panjetan* representing the "palm of a hand", bearing *tughra* and inscribing the names of Shī'a Imams on a metal plate right in the centre of the *alam*, provided a fresh imagery to the eyes of the Hindu devotees, who had a long-standing tradition in India to worship the feet "*padas*" and "palms" of the Hindu divinity...³⁹

Nigam goes on to distinguish Hindu and Muslim perceptions of *ʿālam*, explaining that while Hindus consider them to be objects of worship, symbolizing divinity, Muslims find in them an inspiration to remember the tragedy of Karbalā', as well as a means through which to pay their respects to the martyr. He underlines this difference from the Muslim perspective: "Yet, the element of worship was not there, as a Muslim is supposed to worship only one God as per the canonical injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān."⁴⁰

³⁸ For details of relics kept in *ʿĀshūrkhāna* or incorporated in the *ʿālam*, see Naqvi, "Socio-Cultural Impact," *passim*.

³⁹ M. L. Nigam, "Indian Ashur Khanas: A Critical Appraisal" in *Red Sand*, 120.

⁴⁰ Nigam, *Ibid.*, 121. As long as Islam has been lived and studied in its Indian context, the question of the role and influence of Hindu culture on Muslim beliefs and practices has come up. Sometimes vehemently. The syncretism of Akbar, the cult of the saints, the nexus between mystical expression and the *Bhakti* movement, and various aspects of popular practice have all been issues of comment or criticism from both Muslims and non-Muslims. As Annemarie Schimmel notes, the rhetoric of Indian Muslim reformers has often aimed at distancing Muslim practices from those of Hindus; see "Islamic Religious Year," in *Oxford Encyclopedia*, II: 455. Certainly the diverse independent groups within the Shī'i community (eg. Bohra, Khoja, Ithna Ashari, etc.) have received a considerable amount of this type of criticism, as a number of scholars have noted; see Marc Gaborieau, "A Nineteenth-Century Indian 'Wahhab' Tract Against the Cult of Muslim Saints: *Al-Balagh al-Mubin*" in *Muslim Shrines in India*, ed. Christian W. Troll (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 198-239, especially his reference to fieldwork among Muslims of Nepal. For this kind of reformist attack in a non-Shī'i Indian setting, see my unpublished paper, "The Night of Mercy: Gender and Ritual in Indian Islam," presented at the annual meeting of the Middle Eastern Studies Association, Washington, D.C., December 1995.

That the *alam* in particular has often been a lightning rod for these kind of tensions, particularly in the Sunni-Shī'i context, is supported by the following sixteenth century report from Bijapur: "As a clamorous procession of five hundred Shi'as approached Shah Sibghat Allah's *Akhanqah*, the Sufi sent one of his followers out to destroy the Shi'a symbol/[emphasis mine] being carried at the head of the procession. This was done, touching off a bloody riot between the Shi'as and a number of Sibghat Allah's *murids*." From *Malfuzat-i Shah Sibghat Allah* (1606-7), fols. 4b-5a, compiled by Habib Allah 'Abd al-Fattah, translated and quoted by Richard M. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur: 1300-1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 16.

But for some Shīʿas, whatever the inner motivations or finer distinctions, the similarity of *ālam* rituals with Hindu popular practice is just too close for comfort. One woman confessed what she called her own "radical thinking" about *ālam*; namely, that "they are fast and dangerously becoming close to idols." The very fact that *ālam* have "distinct personalities" attached to them, she pointed out, puts them at a particular risk. Moreover, these days the connection between the *ālam* and the *ahl-i bayt* has become so strong that some Shīʿas feel "their personality is missing" unless there is an *ālam* present.⁴¹

The question this friend asked was, "Do we need *ālams*?" Underlining the importance of Muḥarram for her own spiritual balance, she pointed to the strong history of oration of the martyrdom events, the evocative poetry of lamentation,⁴² and the value of clarifying one's knowledge and philosophy in light of the tragedy at Karbalā'. Of middle age and well-respected in her own field, she nonetheless confessed that she would not be able to share these thoughts with others, particularly the "older generation," many of whom are especially attached to certain rituals and to *ālam* which had been in the family for generations.

An Empowered Presence among the Believers

Although many writers have stressed the symbolism of the standard of battle when writing about *ālam*, I would argue that for many the *ālam* symbolizes not so much a battle standard, but the empowering presence of the martyr in who's name it stands. In other words, something is missed when, for example, the *ālam* is described as "a symbol of fighting for the uncompromising cause of right and justice," giving the participants the feeling "of actually fighting at Karbalā'."⁴³ Although this martial emphasis is perhaps true for many Shīʿī men, especially those engaged in injury-

⁴¹ Conversation in Hyderabad on 24 March 1996.

⁴² See Andreas D'Souza, "Zaynab, I am Coming!" The Transformative Power of *Na'wah*, paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies, Honolulu, 11-14 April 1996.

⁴³ Chelkowski, *Alserat*, 265. Chelkowski is not alone here. In the context of discussing the motif of the *ālam* in mosques of the Qulī Qutb Shah period, M. Abdulla Chughtai notes: "Perhaps its aim was that the *Alams* would always be considered present even in the mosques as an emblem of the war of Karbala..." [emphasis mine]; Chughtai, "Deccan's Contribution," 59. William Knighton, in his book *The Private Life of an Eastern King* (1855)—since republished as *Nawab Nasir-ud-Din Haider of Oudh: His Life and Pastimes* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, n.d.)—uses the word "arms" to convey the meaning of *ālam* to his Victorian English audience. David Pinault, while detailing various Muḥarram rituals in Hyderabad, repeatedly refers to *ālam* as "battle standards" or "battle crests," perhaps to buttress his interpretation of the fervent dedication of young men to matam, self-flagellation and the cause of Ḥusayn; David Pinault, *The Shiites* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), *passim*.

inducing matam, it fails to capture the fullness of the meaning of the *ṣalam*, particularly as experienced by women.⁴⁴

I do not believe that the symbolism described in this article reflects purely female perceptions. Mohammed Fazel's recollections as well as my own and others' observations suggest otherwise.⁴⁵ Still, it is interesting to note that women's tendency to function as individuals in "a network of connections", in contrast to men's action as individuals in a hierarchical social order, may perhaps explain some of the differences here described.⁴⁶ It certainly is an avenue which merits further investigation.

In the final analysis, then, the meaning of the *ṣalam* is personal, complex, and highly individual. Few Shī'as would disagree, however, that it is—in the very least—a sacred emblem which must be treated with a certain amount of respect and reverence. For others, the *ṣalam* becomes a tangible reminder of a powerful intercessor with God and the focus of prayers and supplications. Like the rituals associated with *dargahs*, these practices, too, remain a source of tension within the Shī'ī community and in the larger Muslim context. But, despite this controversy, the *ṣalam* remains a commanding and, for some, a transformation inspiring presence through which men and women physically demonstrate a great love for, respect of, and solidarity with the long-suffering family of the Prophet.

*Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies
Hyderabad, India*

Diane D'Souza



⁴⁴ I have raised the question of gender bias in Islamic Studies research in my earlier mentioned paper, "The Night of Mercy."

⁴⁵ See A. D'Souza's description of rituals at Bargah-i 'Abbās on the tenth of Muḥarram; "Zaynab I am coming!", 2-5.

⁴⁶ Here I am using the words of Deborah Tannen, although the underlying concept is supported much more broadly by research by, for example, Carol Gilligan, Evelyn Fox Keller and others. Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), 24-25 and *passim*.

ALEXANDER ROSS AND THE FIRST ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE QUR'ĀN

In the 1630s and 1640s, Abraham Wheelock, the first Professor of Arabic at Cambridge University, began working on an Arabic edition of the Qur'ān. Although he never completed his project, Wheelock attested to the wide-ranging interest in the Qur'ān and in Arabic and oriental studies in the England of the first half of the seventeenth century.¹ Indeed, there was such an interest in the Qur'ān that in 1648, Samuel Hartlib, one of the leading intellectuals of the period, recorded in his *Ephemerides* how two brothers, a grocer and a stationer, were planning to "cause all the Alcoran to bee graven and so printed which will Exceed all that ever hath beene done. . . . But it will cost some thousands of lib."² Because of lack of funds, their edition did not see light.

Meanwhile, there were other Arabists who were examining the Qur'ānic and oriental manuscripts available in the university libraries of Oxford and Cambridge. John Gregory (1607-1646), an Oxford graduate, made use of the growing collection of oriental material at the Bodleian Library to advance his knowledge of Islamic history and thereby use that knowledge in the exegesis of Christian scriptures. In his posthumously published *The Works of the reverend and learned Mr. John Gregory Master of Arts of Christ's-Church*, Gregory assured his readers that the textual authenticity of the Qur'ān was more reliable than that of the New Testament and that the Qur'ān would withstand theological scrutiny if it were examined not in translation but in the original Arabic. To further challenge his readers for whom such an assurance was troublesome, Gregory bluntly stated that while the Bible suffered from the division of its material between the "Canonical and Apocryphal. There's no Apocrypha in the Alcoran."³ The Qur'ān had fewer problems about its canon than the Bible

¹ For Arabic and Qur'ānic studies in the Renaissance and the seventeenth century, see Karl H. Dannenfeldt, "The Renaissance Humanists and the Knowledge of Arabic," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 2 (1955): 96-117; Hartmut Bobzin, "Latin Translations of the Koran: A short overview," *Der Islam*, 70 (1993): 193-206; and *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation* (Beirut/Stuttgart, 1995). See also chapter 3 in my *Islam in England. 1558-1685* (forthcoming, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

² *The Hartlib Project*, HP, 31/22/39b, *Ephemerides* 1648, Part 3, 1648 (June/July - December). Hartlib continued: "Alcoran to bee graven and so printed which will Exceed all that ever hath beene done and may be insinuated by Merchants to the Turks with the Refutation which will seeme to be fairly written. But it will cost some thousands of lib."

³ *The Works of the reverend and learned Mr. John Gregory Master of Arts of Christ's-Church, Oxon: in two parts* (1665, 1671, 1684), a3v. For a more detailed study of Gregory, see my "Some Notes on John Gregory and Islam", forthcoming in *Discoveries*.

did, and it also had fewer problems in regard to the transmission and accuracy of its final version. It would be impossible, wrote Gregory, to claim "a miraculous Conservation and Incorruption of the Text" of the Bible: "The Alcoran it self hath had much better luck."⁴ Furthermore, the style of the New Testament was good, wrote Gregory, "but not admirable," and although the supreme value of the New Testament lay in its revelation, its style, he admitted was inferior to other works: "Reade Ben Syra and the Arabick Centuries of Proverbs: Reade the Alcoran it self."⁵ As a text, Gregory concluded, the Qur'ān was less problematic than the Bible.

Gregory's praise of the Qur'ān may have proved irritating to English writers and theologians who were confident that their scriptures were beyond challenge. A few years later, and possibly in reaction to this praise of the Qur'ān, the Scottish polemicist, poet and religious historian, Alexander Ross (1592-1654) produced the first English translation of the Qur'ān. For a man who studied world religions and history (he wrote a continuation to Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*), the Qur'ān was obviously an important document. Having noticed, as he himself stated, translations of the Qur'ān in "Latin, Italian, French" and other European languages,⁶ Ross undertook an English translation which he sent to the press in March 1649: *The Alcoran of Mahomet, Translated out of Arabique into French; By The Sieur Du Ryer. Lord of Malezair, and Resident for the King of France, at Alexandria. And newly Englished for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish Vanities*. This was the first complete English translation of the Qur'ān and remained the only version of the Arabic text available to the common reader until the second quarter of the eighteenth century.

Ross did not know Arabic and relied completely on the French translation by Andrew du Ryer (c. 1580-1660) who had served as the French Consul in Egypt. The French translation of the Qur'ān, which was based on the original Arabic, had appeared in Paris in 1647: *L'Alcoran de Mahomet translate d'Arabe en Francois, par le Sieur du Ryer Sieur de la Garde Malezair*. Perhaps because the translation had had the blessing of King Louis XIV ("Avec Priuilege du Roy"), Ross, who was a beneficiary of the English monarch, Charles I, and had received the vicarage of Carisbrooke in the Isle of Wight from him, may have thought that by translating the Qur'ān, he too might receive royal patronage.⁷

⁴ *Ibid.*, b2v.

⁵ *Ibid.*, b3r.

⁶ *The Alcoran of Mahomet* (London, 1649), A2r. No information about the publisher is given. The Du Ryer French translation was very popular and continued to be printed well into the eighteenth century. There was a German translation of it in 1688.

⁷ See the biography of Ross in *D.N.B.*

When Ross finished his translation, the King was dead (executed on 29 January 1649), and England had turned into a Commonwealth. Non-plussed, Ross sent his text to the Commonwealth licenser. But as soon as it became known that the Qur'ān was being printed in England, one Colonel Anthony Weldon petitioned the Council of State "touching the Turkish Alcoran, informing the same to he [sic] in the Press" whereupon the Council immediately issued a warrant for the sergeant-at-arms to "search for the press where the Turkish Alcoran is being printed, and to seize the same, and the papers: also to apprehend the printer and take him before the Council of State."⁸ On March 21, the printer was apprehended, and all the copies that had been printed of the Qur'ān were "seized."⁹ The Council of State then ordered that the matter be looked into so that the printer, who was in jail, would either be discharged or kept in custody; furthermore, the Council ordered "proceedings for suppressing the books and the further printing of them." Ten days later, on 31 March, the Council of State summoned "Thos. Ross. . . to give an account for the printing of the Alcoran."¹⁰

No documentary evidence has survived about the proceedings against Ross nor about the reasons why there was opposition to the publication of the Qur'ān in English. After all, England had had long dealings with the Muslim Empire, and in December 1648, the Council of Mechanics had voted a toleration of various religious groups, including Muslims:¹¹ for purposes of increasing commercial activity, "Turks" and Jews were allowed to trade in England. Furthermore, as Ross noted, Samuel Purchas and Ephraim Pagitt had already provided general surveys about Muslim theology.¹² Whatever the reasons were that turned the House against the publication of the Qur'ān, those reasons seem to have been ignored since Ross's translation finally came out in print on 7 May 1649.

The prefatory material to the translation provides the only hints about how Ross had reacted to his brush with the new Commonwealth authority and indeed why that authority may have opposed the publication of his "Alcoran." For by way of introduction, Ross added to the translation of

⁸ *Journals of the House of Commons*, comp. Timothy Cunningham (London: House of Commons, 1785), VI, 168; *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Commonwealth, 1649-50*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London: H.M.S.O., 1878), I, 42.

⁹ *Journal of the House of Commons*, VI, 170; *C.S.P. Commonwealth*, I, 45.

¹⁰ *C.S.P. Commonwealth*, I, 63.

¹¹ Cited in H. S. Q. Henriques, *The Return of the Jews to England* (London: Macmillan, 1905), 36.

¹² For Muslims in England, see my "Muslims in Seventeenth-Century England", forthcoming in *Journal of Islamic Studies*. There are numerous studies on the image of Islam and the Muslims in the English Renaissance: the most comprehensive remains Samuel C. Chew's, *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England During the Renaissance* (New York: Octagon Press, 1974, first publ. 1937).

Du Ryer's "Epistle to the Reader" and "A Summary of the Religion of the TURKS" two letters of praise that had been sent to du Ryer from numerous consuls along with the pass which the "grand Seignior" had issued to him for his travels between France and the Ottoman Empire. These letters had not appeared in the French text: Ross wanted to show the respect which du Ryer had earned from Christians and Muslims alike for undertaking the translation. Most importantly, however, Ross inserted a three-page address at the very beginning of the book, "The Translator to the Christian Reader," in which he turned his "Alcoran" into a venue for criticizing the new Commonwealth administration and its censorship.

As a Royalist, and by theological inclination a High Anglican who had been a true champion of Archbishop Laud and of Laudianism, Ross was deeply anxious about the political and religious condition of England. He looked at France and saw a monarchy with a powerful grip on religious authority: neither king nor archbishop had been executed there by their subjects as had happened in England. Furthermore, the dismantling of the national church in England had spawned new sects and heresies which had taken hold of the army and had spread among the rest of the population. Ross, who viewed the "Turkish" religion as a heresy, turned now against these "heretics" at the helm of the English state and explained to the "Christian Reader" that the reason why he had been forbidden from publishing his text was because the "Batch" of heretics in Whitehall did not want another heresy to threaten their own:

Therefore (Christian Reader) though some, conscious their own instability in Religion, and of theirs (too like Turks in this) whose prosperity and opinions they follow, were unwilling this should see the Presse, yet am I confident, if thou hast been so true a votary to orthodox Religion, as to keep thy self untainted of their follies: this shall not hurt thee: And as for those of that Batch, having once abandoned the Sun of the Gospel, I believe they will wander as far into utter darknesse, by following strange lights, as by this Ignis Fatuus of the Alcoran.¹³

Ross believed that "orthodox" Protestant Christians need not be anxious about the Qurʾān because it could not shake their faith. Neither should the "Batch" of Cromwellians be anxious either, for they had already wandered into the "Darkness" of heresy and the "Alcoran" was no more than another heresy to which they might subscribe. Like the "Turks," these Cromwellians were so religiously insecure that they prohibited the publication of dissenting views. Had the King been alive, Ross implied, he would not have worried about the translation, and Britons would not have had to

¹³ *The Alcoran of Mahomet*, A3r.

fear the Islamic text because their religion, under their devout King, would have been well protected. Now that the King was dead, there was fear that the Qur'ān, backed by the powerful Empire of the Ottomans, might just seize on the national turmoil and decentralization and implant itself in English society.

Once Ross finished his introduction, he turned to the text of the Qur'ān. And here he followed the translation of du Ryer closely, but he added a table of contents and chapter numbers at the beginning of each sūra—neither of which du Ryer had done. He translated word for word from the French, including the marginal references to Erpenius, "Gelaldin" and "Kitab el-tenoir"—the latter two the most frequently cited sources by du Ryer. There were few marginalia which Ross added of his own—exclamations like "O Mahomet," or explanations as when in chapter 24 the text read "Catamite" and Ross interjected: "Is a man or boy kept unlawfully."¹⁴ Throughout, his style was uncouth and his tone was harsh and uncompromising.

Ross's chief departure from du Ryer, however, occurred at the end of the translation. Ross appended two units on "The Life and Death of Mahomet" and "A needful Caveat or Admonition for them who desire to know what use may be made of, or if there be danger in reading the Alcoran: By Alexander Ross." These were added to the text after it had been printed but before it had gone to the binders: for the units do not continue the pagination of the Qur'ān and consist of a separate set of sheets. Evidently, between his brush with the law and the final appearance of the translation in bookstores, Ross decided to add these units in order to further vindicate himself. The "Life" consists of an assembly of legendary stories about the Prophet which allowed Ross free reign for his anti-Muslim bigotry, while the "Caveat" served him in further attacking the Cromwellian authorities:

I know the publishing of the Alcoran may be to some dangerous and scandalous; dangerous to the Reader, scandalous to the higher Powers, who notwithstanding have cleared themselves by disliking the publishing, and questioning the publishers thereof: but for the danger, I will deliver in these ensuing Propositions my opinion.¹⁵

Ross introduced 18 propositions in which he repeated the same thesis he had made in "The Translator to the Christian Reader:" that reading "Alcoran" does not constitute any "danger" for those who are sound in their faith. Then he asked sarcastically, why should the "higher Powers"

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁵ This and subsequent quotations from the "Caveat" are unpaginated.

want to suppress an Arabic text while the Arabic language in which the Qurʾān is written is "so much learned and taught in Schools and Christian Universities?" Wasn't Arabic being taught so that "by it we may come to the knowledge of Mahomet's Laws and Religion?" Ross was aware of the extent of Arabic studies in France and Holland (England's two main rivals in commerce with the Muslim Empire), and he seized this opportunity to ridicule the Cromwellian censorship which was prohibiting the reading of material from a civilization with which England had traded and battled for over a century. But then Ross turned to a not unfamiliar method of religious and social criticism in seventeenth-century Europe where a Christian writer adopted the perspective/persona of the Muslim in order to criticize conditions in Christendom. In proposition 15, he stated that there were passages in the Qurʾān and there were cultural and religious features of Islam that would make the sectaries at the helm of the English state "blush":

And indeed if Christians will but diligently read and observe the Laws and Histories of the Mahometans, they may blush to see how zealous they are in the works of devotion, piety, and charity, how devout, cleanly, and reverend in their Mosques, how obedient to their Priests, that even the great Turk himself will attempt nothing without consulting his Mufti . . . how constantly do they observe their Fasts from morning till night a whole month together; how loving and charitable the Muslemans are to each other, and how careful of strangers, may be seen by their Hospitals, both for the Poor and the Travellers.

The passage is a scathing attack on the new regime in England and bluntly argues that the Muslims are better, in all respects, than the regicides. For Ross, the Qurʾān was a suitable text with which to attack the Commonwealth authority. Whether that had been part of his intention in translating it in the first place is not clear, but after the proceedings against him and the printer, Ross bluntly used it as a means with which to ridicule censorship (a censorship, however, which he would have happily enforced against the sectaries). Ross presented the Qurʾān as proof of the intellectual and religious anarchy that occurs when sects are allowed to proliferate and when religious authority is weakened. While he may have initially wanted to 'expose' to the English reader the "Alcoran of Mahomet," he now used it to demonstrate the insecurity of the new regime.

Notwithstanding the inaccuracy of the translation or the bigotry of the translator, "The Alcoran of Mahomet" became a popular text in England. Although there was only one edition of it in 1649, there were two imprints—attesting to its wide circulation (the only difference between the two imprints was in size: one is 17 cm. and the other is 19 cm.). There is ample evidence to show that writers and thinkers from all sectors in En-

glish society read Ross's "Alcoran" and alluded to it. Samuel Hartlib recorded in his *Ephemerides* of January-June 1649 a reference to what must have been the Ross translation (although he did not mention Ross's name): "Alcoran is translated into English out of French by a Friend of Mr. Wahl's who also hath translated other bookes out of French."¹⁶ On 2 May 1649, John Dury, Hartlib's friend and correspondent, also referred to it: "The Alcoran is come forth in English."¹⁷ Significantly, neither mentioned Ross and neither commented on the quality of the text. Possibly, they had heard about the text as a result of the controversy surrounding its publication but had not yet seen it. The Independent theologian Nathaniel Homes, however, read it carefully and in his 1653/54 *The Resurrection Revealed*, he cited verses from the "English Edition:" "Chap. 3. twice, 4. thrice. In 5. 10, 13. 14 15, 16, 18, 19."¹⁸ A year earlier, 1652, a refutation of Islam, originally written by Johannes Andreas "the Moor" in the late fifteenth century, was translated by Joshua Notstock who warned in his "Preface to the translation" that there were differences between his Qur'ānic citations and those in Ross's because the available texts of the Qur'ān were not uniform about the number of Suras ("Azoara"):

These Azoara are made fewer, or more, according to severall editions; and hence it is that the quotations out of the Alchoran, mentioned in this following discourse, do not answer the Azoara of the Alchoran as we have it in English.¹⁹

It is evidence of the limited resources available to English scholars for refuting Islam that this sixteenth-century text was frequently used in seventeenth-century anti-Islamic polemic. Henry More, the leader of the Cambridge Platonists, read this text carefully, and so did Lancelot Addison, author in 1679 of *The First State of Mahumedism: or an Account of the Author and Doctrines of that Imposture*.²⁰ The Dutch Arabist Golius thought of translating it into Dutch, but he never finished the project while Humphrey Prideaux, author of a very hostile text on Islam at the end of the seventeenth century, also alluded to it.²¹

¹⁶ *HP*, 31/22/9B.

¹⁷ *HP*, 41/1/25A-28B.

¹⁸ Nathaniel Homes, *The Resurrection Revealed* (London, 1654), 418.

¹⁹ Joshua Notstock, *The Confusion of Muhamed's Sect, or A Confutation of the Turkish Alcoran* (London: H. Blunden, 1652), C1v.

²⁰ Henry More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660), 158; Lancelot Addison, *The First State of Mahumedism* (1679), 39.

²¹ J. Burgman, "Arabic Scholarship" in *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Th. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer and G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 210; Prideaux, *The True nature of imposture fully display'd in the life of Mahomet... offered to the consideration of deists of the present age* (1679, 2nd ed.).

Meanwhile, the Quaker George Fox read Ross's translation carefully and quoted extensively from it in his "debate" with the "King of Algiers."²² So popular was the demand for the text that in 1688, another edition of Ross's "Alcoran" was published in England. It was the same text exactly, but the introductory material was rearranged, and the "Life" and the "Caveat" which had been at the end of the book were now moved to the opening, elevated from a postscript to an introduction that would provide the reader with the proper outlook by which to approach Islam.²³ In 1698, the New England preacher Cotton Mather quoted from the "words of the Alcoran, (or Turkish BIBLE)" as they had been translated by Ross.²⁴ The Qur'an in English had crossed the Atlantic.

English and New England readers were interested in Ross's translation, and while some of them may not have realized how bad the translation was, others did. Indeed, it is indicative of both the rising interest in orientalist studies in England and the development of textual criticism that Ross's inaccuracy did not pass unnoted. Henry Stubbe, who wrote the first sympathetic biography of the Prophet Muhammad in English in the 1670s, denounced both Ross's and Du Ryer's work:

Our English translation follows the French, and the French is very corrupt, altering and omitting many passages.²⁵

Stubbe ridiculed Ross for presuming to translate the Qur'an without mastering the "Arabian tongue" and without availing himself of the "Arabick, Persian, and Turkish Commentaries." Such ignorance or unwillingness on the part of Ross to develop an "Interest" in these sources resulted in his "obtrud[ing] on the world such figments as Mahomet never uttered."²⁶ Stubbe also criticized Ross for merely adding in the margins allusions to *Kitāb al-Tanwīr* and Gelaldin: for Ross had neither indicated the exact page references nor indeed whether those texts were available (presumably in a Latin translation) to the reading public.²⁷

²² See my "Some Notes on George Fox and Islam," *The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, 55 (1989): 271-76.

²³ *The Alcoran of Mahomet* (London: Randal Taylor, 1688).

²⁴ Cotton Mather, *A Pastoral Letter to the English Captives in Africa from New England* (Boston, 1698), 8.

²⁵ Henry Stubbe, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism with the Life of Mahomet*, ed. Hafiz Mahmud Khan Shairani (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1954), 159.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ "Gelaldin" refers to Jalāl-uddīn Maḥallī (1389-1459) and Jalāl-uddīn Suyūṭī (1445-1505). Together they wrote a vast commentary on the Qur'an called *Tafsīr Jalalain* which was widely accepted in the Muslim world (see Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, II, 113, 138). The "Kitāb al-tenoir" might refer to a commentary by al-Qazabadi on the Qur'anic commentary of al-Bidāwī, *Tanwīr al-baṣā'ir bi-anwār al-tanzīl* (Brockelmann, Suppl. II, 741, No. 71). I am grateful to Aisha Musa and Ruud Peters for these references.

Meanwhile, other writers were simply choosing either to ignore or to underplay Ross's translation altogether. Samuel Hartlib wrote in his *Ephemerides* about the continental orientalist Buncle whose "designe [is] to make an exact Concordance upon the Alcoran to publish it with vulgar and his own new Translation with marginals of References."²⁸ In his later correspondences with his friend John Worthington, who later became Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, Hartlib continued to assert the need for a good translation of the Qur'ān, a concordance, and some Muslim commentaries. At no point in his correspondence did he allude to or indicate his satisfaction with Ross's translation. Indeed, in a letter written to Worthington in 1659, Hartlib concurred that Johannes Hottinger (1620-1667), Professor of Arabic at Leiden, should translate the Qur'ān into Latin so that it could become accessible to the European reader.²⁹ Significantly, Hottinger had acquired a copy of the Qur'ān in Arabic and was studying it in conjunction with the exegesis of Biḍāwī.³⁰ Hartlib was looking forward to a Qur'ān that was produced by somebody, such as Hottinger, who was competent in "Oriental studies."³¹ A few months later, Worthington agreed that "Alcoran" should be translated into "a language generally known, as the Latin is,"³² and in a letter to Hartlib on 3 June 1661, he confirmed the need for an accurate study of the sources of Judaism and Islam:

if Christians would more knowingly and pertinently deal with Jews and Mahometans, they should be acquainted with the Mishnaioth [the Mishna Talmūd] and the Alcoran.³³

How alert Ross was to the unfavorable and/or dismissive scholarly reaction to his translation is not documented. But in his *Pansebeia, or a View of all Religions in the World . . . Together with a Discovery of all known Heresies*, which he published four years after the Qur'ān (and which was frequently reprinted in the seventeenth century, in English, Dutch, French and German), Ross tried to remedy some of his failures. Having been criticized for not using "Commentaries" in his writing on Islam, Ross made marginal allusions to "Borrius, Laniccrus, Knolles, Camcrarius Jovius, etc." and to "Menavine, Nicholaus Nicholai, Septemcastrencis, etc."—none of whom was a Muslim writer.³⁴ Obviously,

²⁸ *HP*, 31/22/9B, *Ephemerides*, 1648, Part 1.

²⁹ John Worthington, *The Diary and Correspondence of Dr. Worthington*, ed. James Crossley (The Chetham Society, 1867), I, 181.

³⁰ Addison, *The First State of Mahumedism*, (London, Will. Crook, 1687), 51.

³¹ Worthington, *Diary*, I, 182.

³² *Ibid.*, I, 243.

³³ *Ibid.*, I, 320.

³⁴ *Pansebeia or, A View of all Religions in the World* (London: John Williams, 1675), 162 ff. "Borrius" is Adrianus Borrius (1565-1630), a Dutch theologian; "Knolles" is Richard Knolles, author of the very popular *The Generall Historie of the Turks* (first publ. 1603 and repeatedly

he had not advanced in his Arabic and Qurʾānic studies and may have even forgotten the text of the Qurʾān which he had translated: for he stated that the one copy of the Qurʾān which "is now extant [among Muslims]. . . is divided into 124 Chapters,"³⁵ although in his own translation he had the correct 114 sūras.

In 1679, Lancelot Addison published *The First State of Mahumedism* in which he "doubted whether there be any true Edition of the Alcoran in the European Language:"³⁶ all translations, in his view, were inadequate. Indicative of his disregard for Ross's translation, Addison used Du Ryer's version, as did John Locke and Thomas Tenison too.³⁷ By the beginning of the eighteenth century, British orientalists such as Edward Pococke the Son, Simon Ockley, John Hughes, Richard Parker and others published numerous histories and translations from Arabic, but none of them felt competent to approach a translation of the Qurʾān—a task so formidable that no Arabist from the beginning of the Renaissance had attempted in England. Such a task was left to George Sale, who, in 1734, produced his translation of the Qurʾān which, notwithstanding some drawbacks, was a dedicated attempt to render the Arabic text accurately into English. In his title, Sale showed that he was aware of the Ross translation, for he added that the Qurʾān was "Commonly Called The Alkoran of Mohammed"—exactly the words that appear in Ross's title. In his address to the reader, however, he openly attacked Ross's text:

The English version is no other than a translation of Du Ryer's, and that a very bad one; for Alexander Ross, who did it, being utterly unacquainted with the Arabic, and no great master of the French, has added a number of fresh mistakes of his own to those of Du Ryer; not to mention the meanness of his language, which would make a better book ridiculous.³⁸

reprinted and expanded); "Jovius" is Paolo Giovio (1483-1552) and author of *Commentario de la cose de turchi* (1535); Nicholas Nicholay was a French traveller whose account of the Ottoman Empire appeared in 1585 in English, *The Nauigations, peregrinations and voyages, made into Turkie by Nicholas Nicholay. . . Translated out of the French by T. Washington the younger.*

³⁵ *Panseaia*, 163.

³⁶ Addison, *The First State*, 49.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3. For Locke, see my "John Locke and the 'Turbanned Nations'", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2 (1991): 67-77. In his *Of Idolatry: A Discourse in which is endeavoured A Declaration of, Its Distinction from Superstition* (London, 1678), Thomas Tenison, who was to become Archbishop of Canterbury, used the Latin text of the Qurʾān and referred to the scholarship of Pococke, Hottinger and Selden (143-44). He did not mention Ross.

³⁸ George Sale, *The Koran Commonly Called The Alkoran of Mohammed. Translated into English from the Original Arabic* (London: Frederick Warne, n.d.), viii. For a study of Sale, see Shereen Khairallah, "George Sale and his Circle, 1697?-1736," *The Near East School of Theology: The Theological Review*, 9 (1988): 7 ff.

Such an attack by the leading Arabist of the age should have been sufficient to seal the fate of the Ross translation. Over half a century later, however, and across the Atlantic, Ross's translation was re-published in 1806. It is ironic that the "First American Edition" of the Qur'ān (as it was advertised on the title-page) should have been the worse of the two available English translations: *The Koran Commonly called The Alcoran of Mahomet. Translated from the Original Arabick into French, By the Sieur de Ryer. . . The whole now faithfully translated into English*.³⁹ The text was published by Isaiah Thomas Jr. (1773-1819) who was a bookseller in Boston and in other cities of New England, and a publisher of almanacs. His father, Isaiah Thomas, was an antiquarian with deep interest in religious history. Why Thomas chose the Ross rather than the Sale translation is not clear (although as his title shows, he had actually borrowed the first part of Sale's title and then added the rest of Ross's title). Thomas added footnotes, sometimes turned Ross's marginalia into footnotes and at other times omitted them altogether. He also omitted all of Ross's introductory material and postscripts. There was a short address "To the Reader" which included some accurate information which had not been mentioned by Ross: the Qur'ān "declaimeth against such as worship idols, particularly against the inhabitants of the city of Mecca, and against the Coreis. . . [It is known as] El Forcan, that is, that distinguisheth good from evil." But the tone of the preface is negative and bears the imprint of Ross's hostile attitude.

The impact of Ross's translation on English society should not be underestimated. His English text, with its bigotry and inaccuracy, was the only primary source on Islam available for the reading public in the second half of the seventeenth century and in the early part of the eighteenth century. Whoever read the introductions and the postscripts emerged with a deeply negative view of the Qur'ān. And yet there was no alternative to Ross's translation: du Ryer's French version was inaccurate and so too was the Italian, while Keton's medieval Latin version which had been republished in the sixteenth century was also inaccurate. Meanwhile, there were very few copies/manuscripts of the Qur'ān in Arabic in England and these were housed at the two university libraries. Not until the end of the century, 1694, would the first Arabic edition of the Qur'ān be published in Hamburg by the orientalist Abraham Hinckelmann, *Al-Coranus s. lex Islamica Muhammedis*. But then, only the specialists would have been able to read it.

It is by addressing the common reader and not the specialist that Ross 'succeeded' in his translation. In this respect, Ross must be given credit

³⁹ It was "Printed by Henry Brewer, for Isaiah Thomas, Jun." in Springfield.

REVIEW ARTICLE

Nationalism, Elite Politics, and the Break-up of Pakistan

HASAN ZAHEER: THE SEPARATION OF EAST PAKISTAN: THE RISE AND REALIZATION OF BENGALI MUSLIM NATIONALISM. KARACHI, PAKISTAN: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1994. 511 pp.

STANLEY WOLPERT: ZULFI BHUTTO OF PAKISTAN; HIS LIFE AND TIMES. NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1993. 378 pp.

M. A. MANNAN, ED.: JUDGMENTS ON THE CONSTITUTION, RULE OF LAW, AND MARTIAL LAW IN PAKISTAN. KARACHI, PAKISTAN: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1993. 412 pp.

The early 1970s witnessed a major transformation in the Muslim world's political system. The Islamic republic of Pakistan, the largest, in terms of population, in the Muslim World, disintegrated and there emerged two successor states—Pakistan in the west and Bangladesh in the east. In addition to the uniquely difficult geographical separation of its two constituent parts, united Pakistan lacked either cultural or linguistic unity which made the case of regional autonomy in economy and culture fairly strong.¹ The conduct and attitudes of the governing elite of the ostensibly all-Pakistan government toward East Pakistan made the case for autonomy stronger still. The attempts by the central regime to deny the Bengali demands and to impose a unitary rule in the name of national unity made the Bengali autonomist movement and its political spearhead, the Awami League, all the more popular among the Bengalis. In the first and only free and fair national election held in 1970, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his party, the Awami League, emerged victorious. It captured 160 out of the directly elected 162 seats and garnered 72.57 percent of the votes cast in East Pakistan. This indicates that about 28 percent of the East Pakistani electorate preferred non-Awami League leadership. In West Pakistan, the Pakistan People's Party of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto emerged as the majority party winning 81 of 138 seats. The Awami League was in an absolute majority in the National Assembly.

Despite winning a majority in the Assembly, the Bengalis were not allowed to take office, and the Assembly never met. Sheikh Mujib, by

¹ See W. A. Wilcox, *Pakistan: The Consolidation of a Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

virtue of his majority, should have become the prime minister of Pakistan. Neither President Yahya Khan nor Zulfikar Ali Bhutto would allow such a process to take place. This refusal of the military-bureaucratic-industrial complex of West Pakistan to share power with the Bengali counter-elite created a bitter stalemate in the politics of Pakistan and ignited the first sparks of what later on came to be known as the war of liberation. After a bitter ten months' war, costing millions of lives, Bangladesh Liberation Army and the formidable contingents of Indian armed forces defeated the Pakistani army. Thus the final disintegration of Pakistan came about in December 1971.

The break up of Pakistan has received increasing attention from the community of scholars. Given the recency of the event, the final verdict is yet to emerge. Hasan Zaheer's *The Separation of East Pakistan* is yet another attempt at "an objective analysis of the issues which bedeviled East-West relations" which led ultimately to the break up of Pakistan (p. xvi). As the sub-title indicates, this is an attempt to trace the historical development of the Bengali nationalism which culminated in the creation of Bangladesh. Divided into two, the first part of the book outlines the context of the Bengali struggle for a recognized national identity between 1936 and 1969, with specific focus on the years surrounding Pakistan's fragmentation. The period of General Yahya Khan's interregnum when the Army veered from "persuasion to force" to maintain the unity of the country receives, as it should, a good deal of attention. The second part of the book deals skillfully with the rapid process of the dissolution of the Federation following the nine months of Pakistan's "clamp down" on East Pakistan. The author is at his best in discussing the economic consequences of the military operation for both wings of Pakistan, and its regional and international repercussions.

One can learn a great deal from Hasan Zaheer's *The Separation of East Pakistan*. Zaheer, a career bureaucrat who in 1990 retired as a cabinet secretary serving under four prime ministers and two presidents of Pakistan, is familiar with events and personalities and is ably suited to describe and analyze the break up of Pakistan. His book is serious in both conception and execution. The result is and should be of great help in comprehending the problems and paradoxes of national integration with particular reference to Pakistan. Whether Zaheer is right in seeing Bengali nationalism as the cause of disintegration, and in blaming Yahya Khan and the hawkish generals to the exclusion of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for the debacle, is an open question.

Muslim Bengali Nationalism Leading to Pakistan

The major thesis of Hasan Zaheer is that "the emergence of Bangladesh on 16 December 1971 was the culmination of the struggle of Bengali

Muslim nationalism, launched in the mid-thirties, to establish a separate identity of its own. . . (p. 3). Bengali nationalism, according to him, "had emerged as a powerful force even before independence" in 1947 (p. xviii). Such an interpretation of the political processes that led to the creation of Bangladesh not only oversimplifies the factors responsible for the creation of the new state, but grossly misrepresents the nature of political developments in the pre-1947 Muslim demand for a separate state on the basis of a religious ideology and in the post-colonial social, political, and economic developments in the state of Pakistan resulting in the emergence of Bangladesh. While Islam provided the *raison d'être* for the Bengalis to support the movement for Pakistan, it was the linguistic-cultural identity of the Bengalis which provided the impetus for the liberation struggle of Bangladesh. Risking oversimplification, one may say that without Muslim Bengali support, perhaps, there might not have been a Pakistan. Indeed, without Bengali Muslims constituting the eastern wing of Pakistan, there would not have been any Bangladesh.

Bengali Muslims, according to Peter Bertocci, bear "a composite cultural identity, uniting both 'Muslim-ness' and 'Bengaliness.'"² However, over time, they oscillated between the religious and ethnic dimensions. Bengal, in the nineteenth century, witnessed the rise of several powerful religious reform movements. They played a crucial role in transforming the world-view of the average Bengali Muslims, thus preparing the ground for religious nationalism in the area.³ Likewise, the major issues of the early twentieth century such as the partition of Bengal in 1905 and its annulment in 1911, granting of separate representation to Muslims under the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909, and the foundation of the Muslim League in 1906, had religious dimensions. These issues helped further mobilize the Muslims in favor of a separatist Muslim ideology. In the 1940s, when the movement for Pakistan gained momentum, the most tangible support for the Muslim League came from Bengal. The resurgence of Hinduism further prompted the nascent Pakistan movement. The aggressive Hindu nationalism of B. G. Tilak, and, later, M. K. Gandhi's passive nationalism, with its symbols of the '*gao-mata*' (mother cow), the '*charkha*' (spinning wheel), and the like, propagated doctrines embedded in Hindu philosophy. The Muslims of Bengal, alarmed by the former and unable to identify with the latter, once again turned to the Muslim League. This provided the Muslims in Bengal with a new and urgent sense of identity that was

² Peter J. Bertocci, "Bangladesh: Composite Cultural identity and Modernization in a Muslim Majority State" in Philip H. Stoddard, David C. Cuthell and Margaret W. Sullivan (eds.), *Change and the Muslim World* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 76.

³ See Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981).

emotionally satisfying and materially promising. By 1944, the total membership of the Muslim League swelled over half a million in Bengal. In the elections of 1946, the Bengal Provincial Muslim League secured a landslide victory on the "Pakistan issue," winning 114 out of 119 Muslim seats. For Bengalis, creation of Pakistan was in part a religious event. It had, as Cantwell Smith puts it, "stirring religious significance."⁴ The appeal of religious nationalism had become so powerful that the partition of Bengal in 1947, with the loss of Calcutta to India, did not perturb the Bengali Muslims. Loyalty to the Muslim nation reigned supreme in the minds of the Bengalis to the extent that they elected seven non-Bengalis to the Central Assembly from Bengal. Hasan Zaheer is correct in observing that Muslim Bengali nationalism existed prior to Independence in 1947 (p. 9), but this nationalism helped, rather than hindered, the struggle for Pakistan.

Hasan Zaheer tries to build his case largely on the ground that Bengali political leaders had a conflict relationship with those supporting the Muslim League and that leaders like Fazlul Haque and Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy toyed with the idea of having a sovereign Bengal state "not only distinct from the Hindu majority of the province but also from their co-religionists of the other regions of India" (p. 3). He has appended four documents relating to Bengal to buttress his argument. Admittedly, Suhrawardy did announce the plan for a "Sovereign Independent United Bengal" but it was the same Suhrawardy who, in the League's Delhi convention of 1946, moved for making "a sovereign independent State of Pakistan instead of more than one Muslim majority 'independent States'" as was stated in the Historic Lahore Resolution.⁵ Perhaps Suhrawardy was troubled with the contradictory principles, such as religion and ethnicity; the former ostensibly overwhelmed the latter. The same could be said of Fazlul Huq who was called upon by Muhammad Ali Jinnah to move the historic Lahore Resolution which formed the basis for the establishment of Pakistan. As attested to by Morris Jones, Fazlul Huq was the undisputed leader of the Muslim majority province of Bengal and without his support the cause of the All India Muslim League could not be served there.⁶ It is also on record that both Fazlul Huq and Suhrawardy eventually supported the union of all Bengal in Pakistan. On June 20, 1947, the Bengal Legislative Assembly met and in a 126-to-90 vote agreed that, if Bengal remained united, it should join Pakistan. Since, as required by law, the Muslims could not secure the majority Hindu support for legisla-

⁴ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 212.

⁵ M. A. H. Ispahani, *Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah, as I Knew Him* (Karachi: Ashraf Publishers, 1966), 159-60.

⁶ W. H. Morris-Jones, "Pakistan Post-Mortem and the Roots of Bangladesh," *The Political Quarterly*, XLIII (April-June, 1972), 194-95.

tive action, the vote of the Assembly for a united Bengal as part of Pakistan was nullified.

Bengali Muslim Nationalism Leading to Bangladesh

The story of the secession of East Pakistan begins in 1947 when Pakistan came into existence as an independent Dominion with a political system which was parliamentary and federal. The elites who dominated the Muslim League transferred themselves to Pakistan and became the ruling elites to the exclusion of all other organizations. Those who incurred the displeasure of the League leadership, like Fazlul Huq and Suhrawardy, were scrupulously kept out of power and replaced by pliable men acceptable to the League hierarchy. This caused resentment among the thousands of Muslim Bengali youth who had supported the movement for Pakistan with high hopes. The attempts by the ruling elite to deny the Bengali language and culture a national status and to impose the Urdu language on East Bengalis infuriated the educated Bengalis further and strengthened their ethnic identity. The case for regional autonomy became fairly strong. To make matters worse, the ruling elites kept Islam on an unapproachable pedestal and adopted illegal methods to safeguard their vested interests. As Hasan Zaheer rightly points out, "No prime minister in the parliamentary history of Pakistan was voted out or voted in by the parliament; they were appointed, dismissed, or made to resign by the head of state, who, in each case, happened to be non-Bengali" (p. 47). They used Islam as an argument in political controversies thus reducing its potency as an integrative device. The decade of "praetorian" rule under General Ayub Khan, in which Bengalis had no decisive say, intensified the Bengali elite's feeling that the central Pakistani regime was colonial in relation to East Pakistan. When the constitutional crisis began after the elections of 1970, followed by the Pakistani army crackdown on civilians in East Pakistan, the Bengali support for linguistic and regional identity was almost unanimous. It has been observed that ethnic-based Bengali identity became crystallized during the last days of the Ayub era.

The frustration of the Bengali intelligentsia found its first concrete expression through the formation of the Awami Muslim League in 1949. Though regionally based, it was not a secular organization and certainly not opposed to the state of Pakistan.

With the intensification of controversies surrounding the language and the status of East Pakistan, the emphasis on religion in the political sphere receded significantly. This is indicated by the decision of the party to drop the word 'Muslim' from its name in 1954. Simultaneously, one also notices the mushrooming of several secular and non-communal organizations using symbolic issues of Bengali identity for mass mobilization pur-

poses. However, in course of time, Awami League emerged and was identified as the champion of the Bengali cause. Suhrawardy, as the Chief of the Awami League, tried several times to give the party an all-Pakistan character. He was convinced, as were many others, that there was no hope for East Pakistan to survive as an independent state. He stated in the Constituent Assembly in 1955 that independence for East Pakistan is not merely inconceivable but, as he puts it, "one cannot possibly conceive that anyone can even entertain such an idea."⁷

Despite repeated protestations, the ruling elites of Pakistan held the view that most of the influential Bengali Muslim leaders were neither "true Pakistanis nor really pure Muslims." To Malik Firoz Khan Noon, the Governor of East Pakistan in 1953, Bengalis were "half-Muslims," and to Ayub Khan, the East Bengalis have "all the inhibitions of downtrodden races. . . ."⁸ These attitudes of contempt towards everything concerning East Bengal antagonized the emerging social forces and made consociational politics difficult to operate. The central leadership could not come up with a compromise position that would have lessened the tension between the two wings of Pakistan. They could not even see that the "Six point" demand of the Awami League could have been used as a mechanism for establishing a consociational system sorely needed for a country like Pakistan. Instead, Ayub Khan, as Hasan Zaheer points out, "projected the Six points to discredit the entire opposition" and declared it to be "aimed at achievement of their dream of 'greater sovereign Bengal'" (p. 97).

Barring few radicals, the Bengali leadership did not think of mounting a deliberate movement to undo Pakistan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman never for once declared the independence of Bangladesh. All along, his fight was for the "emancipation" of East Bengalis. His historic 7th March, 1971 speech, which is hailed as the turning point in the East-West relations, ended with "Joy Bangla" and "Joy Pakistan." Known as "Bangabandhu" (the Friend of Bengal), Sheikh Mujib is not given the honor of being the father of the nation. One of the main demands of the Bangladesh Awami League, during Begum Khaleda Zia's rule, was to get the government to declare Sheikh Mujib as the father of the nation. In the 1970 elections, the Awami League nominated its leading figures for national rather than provincial seats, and thus prepared itself to play a leading role at the national level. In his discussion with Yahya Khan, he declared himself to be "the majority leader of all Pakistan." He said point blank that "I have fought for Pakistan. I am not going to secede from it" (p. 134). Finally, even after the emergence of Bangladesh, Mujib assured Bhutto that he

⁷ Constituent Assembly of Pakistan Debates, 1955, 1: 1184-85.

⁸ See David Loshak, *Pakistan Crisis* (London: Heinemann, 1971), 72; Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters: A Political Autobiography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 187.

"was going to keep some link with Pakistan" (p. xxii). Once in Bangladesh, he saw the intensity of public hatred and had to change his mind. The point being stressed here is that despite geographical oddities and the Indian bellicosity, given the goodwill, it should have been possible to save the Islamic Republic of Pakistan with some structural adjustments.

Elite Conflict and the Breakup of Pakistan

It is generally agreed by the scholars and the public alike that Yahya Khan's period was an interlude between the "Ayub era" and the breakup of Pakistan. General Yahya Khan took over power in 1969 with a promise of protecting the country from utter destruction. To defuse the ethnic situation, he promised "maximum autonomy" to the provinces and held the country's first and only elections on a "one man, one vote" basis in December 1970. The post-election scenario left three personalities—Yahya, Mujib and Bhutto—to decide the fate of Pakistan. According to Hasan Zaheer, Yahya was "a vain person," who lacked "political judgement," and managed national affairs in a "cavalier" "parade-ground style" (p. 122). Mujib was "determined to undermine the centre by implementing his Six points." The "Bengali prime minister-designate" demanded that he be "left alone to govern his own province, and dissociate his province from the other units of the Federation" (p. xvi). Whereas, "Bhutto in opposing Mujib and the Six points, was really articulating the stand of the West Pakistani establishment. . . . It would not be fair to blame Bhutto for the postponement of the National Assembly session. . . ." Bhutto "was asking for a federal system with viable and feasible regional autonomy and consensus of all the federating units in its making. . . (pp. 147, 132). "In fact, Yahya seems to have used Bhutto to get out of the situation created by his thoughtless decisions" (p. 147).

Bhutto, as Stanley Wolpert's engrossing and well-researched biography makes evident, was the most influential politician Pakistan has produced and was hailed by millions of Pakistanis "as their *Quaid-i-Awam* ("Leader of the People"), even as they hail Mohammad Ali Jinnah as Pakistan's *Quaid-i-Azam* ("Great Leader") (p. VII). Bhutto felt that it was his messianic duty to awaken the masses and to "eliminate poverty and misery" not only from Pakistan but from the entire Third World.

Largely descriptive, Wolpert's study is the most comprehensive account of Bhutto. The author has benefitted from access to the Bhutto family archives. Like millions of Pakistanis, Wolpert himself is fascinated by Bhutto as is indicated by the constant use of the intimate "Zulfi." Yet Wolpert does not shy away from pointing out Bhutto's inconsistencies and weaknesses. Bhutto was a man of many contradictions: a Western-educated politician wearing the Mao cap, the scion of a feudal family preach-

ing socialism, and a Muslim aristocrat venerating saints and sufis with a lot of bad habits including drinking and infidelity. Wolpert also shows Bhutto's opportunism before his apprenticeship under Ayub Khan and after. As the Prime Minister of post-1971 Pakistan, Bhutto proved to be a vindictive, suspicious ruler who regularly jailed opponents and humiliated his colleagues, calling Zia ul Huq his "Monkey General." "Zulfi's mercurial temperament, the strange sudden shifts in his moods, his suspicious ambivalence toward most people, even his closest friends" etc., (p. 20) warrants much more systematic psychological analysis of the man than is provided by Wolpert.

Wolpert analyzes the discussions that were held between Yahya, Mujib and Bhutto during January to March 1971. The discussion reveals that while Mujib demanded the transfer of power, Bhutto delayed it arguing that "We respect the majority," but "both Punjab and Sind are centres of power... no central government can run without our co-operation" (p. 145). When Yahya declared 3 March 1971 as the date for the opening of the National Assembly, Bhutto threatened to "liquidate" and "break the legs" of the West Pakistani members who attended it (p. 146). Not merely the East Bengalis but, as Wolpert puts it, "many other minority party leaders in the West, who agreed on virtually nothing else, agreed in denouncing Zulfi Bhutto for 'creating a crisis'" (p. 150). Bhutto's political strategy was to play for time, to make himself the prime minister of, if not the whole, at least of West Pakistan. To quote Wolpert:

Here was Zulfi's solution, put as diplomatically yet as bluntly as he could phrase it. . . . "*Idhar hum, udhar tum!*" was the Urdu formulation he used, "Us here, you there!" The People's Party would control West Pakistan, the Awami League would run the East (p. 146).

Yahya was unable to outbid Bhutto's strategies and at Bhutto's insistence postponed the National Assembly. At this the smoldering ethnic nationalism of the Bengalis could no longer contain itself and civil war followed. The military, a victim of Bhutto's strategies, had no choice but to "do its duty" throwing away Pakistan in an episode of violence both tragic and tawdry. The political elites decided for parting of the ways instead of compromise and conciliation.

Elite Accommodation and National Integration

The pre-1971 Pakistan provides a classic case of failure in national integration. The stability of culturally pluralistic societies is threatened not by their fragmented nature but by the failure of the political elites to recognize and accommodate existing linguistic, cultural and regional divisions and interests. Stability in a democratic plural society is generally achieved when a political arrangement is found which gives to all major

groups a meaningful role in the political system. The break up of Pakistan is the result of the inability of the political elites of Pakistan who could not accommodate each other. This suggests that cooperation among political elites is necessary for the maintenance of political stability in a fragmented society. Pakistan's failure in this respect illuminates the key problems of the politics of deeply divided societies.

Various subcultures can work together and achieve political stability if their respective political elites develop a sense of partnership, a sense of accommodation and a feeling that more will be gained by remaining together than by falling apart. Cooperation has to be genuine in terms of rule-making, rule-application, and resource allocating processes. That this sense of accommodation is yet to take deep root in the present Pakistan is attested to by M. A. Mannan's compilation of *Judgments on the Constitution, Rule of Law, and Martial Law in Pakistan* delivered by Chief Justice Dr. Nasim Hasan Shah. The compilation includes judgment on the question of the validity of the Martial Law proclaimed by General Zia-ul-Haq in 1977, the dissolution of the National Assembly of Pakistan by General Zia in 1988, and that by President Gulam Ishaq Khan in 1993. The Assembly in the second instance was restored by the historic verdict of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The compilation also includes judgments relevant to the enforcement of fundamental rights, rule of law and the constitution.

Mannan's compilation shows that a very active concern with profound issues of state and society was characteristic of an individual heading the judiciary in Pakistan. Most importantly, however, it reflects the politics of a frustrated society characterized by elite confrontation rather than cooperation. The ultimate cure for political instability in Pakistan, and similar other, particularly Muslim countries, lies perhaps in the modification of the behavior of their political elites. Political stability would require appropriate arrangements to accommodate subcultural divisions and interests failing which a temporary respite from instability can only be achieved when the emergence of some forceful personality restores one-man rule.

*Department of Political Science
International Islamic University
Malaysia.*

ABDUL RASHID MOTEN



BOOK REVIEWS

Suraiya Faruqi: *PILGRIMS & SULTANS: THE Hajj UNDER THE OTTOMAN*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1994. 244 pp., xi, 6 tables.

Suraiya Faruqi has provided an English-speaking audience with an excellent translation and revision of her earlier *Herrschen über Mekka: die Geschichte der Pilgrimfahrt* (Munich: 1990). Concentrating primarily on the Ottoman period for the English edition, Faruqi presents findings from a large array of archival sources previously untapped. In doing so, she fills a gap in our understanding of the religious, economic, and political significance of the institution of the *hajj* for the Ottomans. 'Abdul-Karim Rāfeq, the leading historian of Ottoman Syria, has suggested that the Ottoman sultans had very little personal interest in the cities of Mecca and Medina, even while claiming the prestige inherent in their title of "Servitor of the Two Holy Places." Although Faruqi does not answer the question raised by Rāfeq—if the sultans were so piously Muslim, why did they never go on pilgrimage themselves—she provides ample evidence that the sultans took their religious responsibility both toward the *hajj* and the holy places seriously.

The Ottoman period witnessed the refurbishing of the mosques of the holy cities as well as the establishment of pious foundations (*waqf*) throughout the empire, the revenues of which were designated for charitable purposes in Mecca or Medina. The sultans also expended treasure and political clout to keep the pilgrimage route open. This was not an easy task given the unruly nature of the desert tribes who saw the pilgrim caravans as an opportunity for plunder. The accumulation of Faruqi's anecdotal evidence indicates that the prestige and the politics of the *hajj* were of central importance to the sultans, even they did not embark on the pilgrimage to the *Hijaz* themselves.

Department of History
Wesleyan University
Middletown, Connecticut

BRUCE MASTER



Heinz Halm: *SHI'Ā ISLAM: FROM RELIGION TO REVOLUTION*, trans. by Allison Brown. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997. i-ix, 176 pp.

There has been a phenomenal increase in the interest in Shī'ite Islam since the Iranian revolution of 1978-79. A number of studies have appeared claiming to provide a balanced interpretation of the religion of the Iranian Muslims shrouded in some kind of imagined mystery that needs to be decoded by objective scholarship of the 'detached' and 'disinterested' academicians. It is remarkable that in the name of academic objectivity, these books have prejudicially perpetuated stereotypical interpretations about the Shī'ite community, which has been not only reduced to a bunch of 'guilt-ridden, self-flagellating' individuals, but also irrational people deprived of any authentic history or culture that is worthy of serious academic analysis.

There is nothing new in what Dr. Halm has paraded in his analysis of the Shī'ite religion in this book. His selective retrieval of the primary sources and his dependence on secondary works raises serious question about the integrity of his scholarly enterprise. If such retrieval is carried out simply to fit a preconceived thesis about how religious institutionalization of suffering and a sense of guilt are manipulated by the so-called mullahs to mobilize downtrodden Shī'ites in order to transform a traditionally quietist Shī'ism to a revolutionary ideology, then it is certainly flawed in its conclusions.

While this thesis might be interesting for political analysts whose political thinking favors such a paradigm in their hegemonic agenda of 'double containment' of the Shī'ī menace in the Middle East, it is a gross misrepresentation of Shī'ite Islam, especially when its history is ig-

nored as 'biased,' as if there existed an unbiased history of any confessional religious community in history. Even the interpretive analysis of Shī'ite rituals of mourning during the 'Āshūrā', mostly derived from the methodologically questionable field work of David Pinault on the Shī'ites of Hyderabad, suffers from obvious inconsistencies. How can one justify a research method that fails to take into account the rituals within the context of the Shī'ite beliefs expounded in that community's texts dealing precisely with the rituals of mourning? The very use of the word 'innocent' for *ma'sūm* and extrapolating some incorrigible connections to the community's religious and political expressions shows the author's lack of comprehension of Shī'ite ethos. It must be pointed out that the Shī'ite expression of devotion on the day of 'Āshūrā' which reads: "I wish I were with you on that day so that I would have attained the great merit (of having died in your cause) (*yā laytanī kuntu ma'akum fa'afūza sawzan asīma*), conveys nothing more than a sense of 'regret' for having missed the opportunity to share the good fortune of martyrdom in the cause of Islam.

University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

ABDULAZIZ SACHEDINA



Daniel W. Brown. *RETHINKING TRADITION IN MODERN ISLAMIC THOUGHT.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. x plus 245 pp. Bibliography. Index. n.p.

Daniel Brown carefully describes and analyzes contrasting opinions in the modern Islamic world. Writing along the lines of G.H.A. Juynboll's *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt* (1969, see MW 61, 122-123) and J.M.S. Baljon's *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation (1880-1968)* (1961), his book differs from these previous ones by its integration around a useful interpretation of the relationship between modernity and tradition. As the author follows debates in India, Pakistan and the Near East dating from the early modern period of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān up to present-day Muslim revivalism, he is concerned to show that discussions about the nature of sunna, the authenticity of *ḥadīth* and the authority of the Prophet are not to be understood as issuing from those who, on the one hand, would reject tradition in opposition to those who, on the other hand, would defend and preserve it. Rather the two sides in controversy are equally concerned "to prove themselves true to the tradition" (p. 139). Brown draws upon the writings of Muḥammad Tawfiq Ṣidqī 'Abd Allāh Chakrālāwī, Ghulām Aḥmad Parwēz, Muḥammad Aslam Jayrājpūrī, Abū al-'Alā Mawdūdī, Fazlur Rahman and Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, among others, but he does not concentrate on these personalities. Instead his method is to use their arguments to illustrate trends of thought. The book is attractively presented and written in a felicitous style. In sum it is a highly commendable treatment of momentous controversy in the Muslim world.

Cromwell, Connecticut

R. MARSTON SPEIGHT



Asghar Ali Engineer. *THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN ISLAM* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. Pbk. 188 pp.

Despite the bland title, this book is a genuine contribution to the study of women's rights in Islam. Asghar Ali Engineer, Director of the Institute of Islamic Studies at Bombay, has written an authoritative critique of Shari'a laws and the current status of women in Islamic countries. He begins by demolishing the main position of orthodox Muslims on the theological impermissibility of contravening Qur'anic injunctions. He cites the example of modern rejection of slavery despite its sanctioning in the Qur'an. The author argues that the rights of women should also be reconciled

with universal modern practices. He targets the Sharī'a as the obstacle to change, accusing it of absorbing pre-Islamic social practices. The author maintains that the Sharī'a evolved and was situational, relying more on the sunna than on the Qur'ān. The four Sharī'a scholars not only disagreed among themselves, they also closed the door of *ijtihād*. Some practices sanctioned in the Qur'ān, he shows, such as temporary marriage, were prohibited by Caliph Omar.

Even when the Qur'ān inspired the Sharī'a, normative statements in the holy book were altered to suit social practices. For example, the compatibility requirement for marriage partners in the Sharī'a does not occur in the Qur'ān. He recommends that jurists should take into consideration the social context in which various passages were revealed, as well as their occasional linguistic ambiguity. He concludes with a call for reforming major areas in Personal Status Law.

This book is essential reading for all those concerned with the issue of reform in Islam.

Lake Forest College
Lake Forest, Illinois

GHADA TALHAMI



HIJRA AS HISTORY AND METAPHOR: A SURVEY OF QUR'ANIC AND ḤADĪTH SOURCES

A number of recent studies¹ have dealt with the hijra as a central concept underlying a range of past and present trends in Islamic thought and action. These authors commonly interpret the notion of hijra within the prism of socioeconomic and political factors prevalent in various post-prophetic periods without adequate appreciation of primary-texts. While not ignoring entirely the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, the remarkably complex nature of the concept of hijra as portrayed in the early sources appears to have been seriously underestimated or simply understudied.² Even conceding, if only for the sake of argument, Eickelman and Piscatori's argument that "the significance of texts derives not from their inherent centrality but from the contingent political, social and economic circumstances of those interpreting them,"³ the analyst needs to be well-informed as to what these texts on the subject matter of hijra relate. Without an adequate knowledge of the complexity of the hijra as revealed in the primary texts, any attempt to investigate what Masud terms the "dynamic interaction between text and social, economic and political conditions"⁴ *a priori*, will at best be flawed.

The present article attempts to remedy this perceived gap in the literature by a thorough exploration of the multifaceted significance of the hijra as expressed in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth literature.⁵ The discussion is divided into three broad sections: (1) Qur'anic precedents (2) the historical hijra and (3) the metaphorical hijra.

¹ See Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, "Social Theory in the Study of Muslim Societies," in *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination*, D. Eickelman and J. Piscatori, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 3-28; Muhammad K. Masud, "The Obligation to Emigrate: The Doctrine of Hijra in Islamic Law" in *Muslim Travellers*, 29-49; Roger Webster, "Hijra and Dissemination of Wahhabi Doctrine in Saudi Arabia," in *Golden Roads. Migration, Pilgrimage and Travel in Mediaeval and Modern Islam*, Ian Netton, ed. (Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 1993), 11-27.

² In his preface to *Golden Roads*, Ian Netton notes that hijra has "profoundly Prophetic antecedents" and yet not one of the papers included in this collection explores these "antecedents" in a systematic and adequate way.

³ Eickelman and Piscatori, "Social Theory," in *Muslim Travellers*, 14.

⁴ M.K. Masud, "The Obligation to Emigrate," in *Muslim Travellers*, 34.

⁵ Whenever possible I have opted for ḥadīth from the six canonical collections. In my citations from lesser-known or obscure sources, the presence of an *isnād* can be taken for granted unless noted otherwise. Any errors of translation or interpretation are my own.

Introduction

During his period of rule as second Caliph, 'Umar b. al-Khattāb is reported⁶ to have convened a council of eminent companions for the purpose of deciding upon a uniform system of dating to be applied throughout the Islamic realm. Among the suggestions as to which year should mark the start of the Muslim calendar were the year in which the Prophet received his first revelations and the year of his death. A third proposal put forward by 'Alī b. Abī Tālib was to calculate dates beginning from the year of the Messenger's flight to Madīna.

That this suggestion was immediately taken up and implemented is indicative of the tremendous importance attributed to the hijra by the first generation of Muslims. In retrospect, it is incontestable that few turning points in human history can compare with the emigration from Makka to Madīna in 622 A.D. Yet the hijra was infinitely more than a remarkable event in the flow of time. As with other decisive incidents in the life of the Prophet, it embraces a variety of concepts which lie at the heart of Islamic spirituality. It is the polymorphic, dynamic nature of these concepts which make the emigration to Madīna a landmark of eternal relevance.

Conceptual Prefigurations of the Hijra in the Qur'ān

The Islamic emigration has numerous and diverse precedents in the history of religions. In the Qur'ān, the theme of righteous flight figures highly in the accounts of many Prophets. The variety of these precursors of the hijra ranges from the deliverance of Noah to the exodus of Moses. In each case, there are interesting parallels to be drawn with the flight of the Prophet to Madīna. The underlying theme in all such examples is that of valiant resistance to doctrinal and/or moral perversity. Flight in this sense is ennobled, first, by its objective of keeping alive the flame of unitarian faith and upright conduct, then, by the willing acceptance of the sacrifices entailed and, finally, by the sublime confidence in God exhibited by those who undertook it. In brief, Hijra is portrayed in these Qur'anic accounts as a choice of "the Higher" over "the lower" and as a steadfast, heroic refusal to compromise with evil.

In this context, the Qur'anic narrations concerning Abraham (Ibrāhīm) deserve closer analysis. Here, as in many other respects, there are fruitful analogies to be drawn between Muḥammad and the great Patriarch.⁷ Both

⁶ Omar Ibn Shabbah, *Kitāb Ta'rikh al-Madīna*, F. Shaltūt, ed. (Jeddah, 1982), 2: 758-59.

⁷ Abraham's establishment of the sanctuary at Makka is mirrored in numerous ḥadīth by the Prophet's *tahrim* of Madīna (See Daoud Casewit, "Fadā'il al-Madīna: The Unique Distinctions of the Prophet's City," *Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. 35, no. 1 [1991]: 5-22). While Abraham did not emigrate to Makka himself he settled Hagar (whose name, interestingly, in Arabic, *Hājar*, is based on the same root as hijra) and his son Ishmael there.

delivered the message of monotheism to their idolatrous peoples, both were rejected, persecuted and finally forced to choose voluntary exile rather than infidelity to revealed truth.⁸ In surveying the various accounts of Abraham's emigration we are able to isolate a number of fundamental ideas which form a useful introduction to the complex nature of the notion of hijra in Islam.

Consequential Discrimination

In its deepest sense, the hijra is a physical actualization of metaphysical discernment between the Absolute and the relative and thus an anticipation of death. In forsaking the relative comforts and consolations of his homeland for the truth of the Absolute, Abraham exclaims: "Verily, I am journeying unto my Lord. . . ." (*innī dhāhibun ilā rabbī*).⁹ Any geographical destination is plainly secondary to a spiritual orientation which might be described as a spatial enactment of the *istirjā'*: "Verily, we belong to God and unto Him are we returning." Hijra is the supreme affirmation of one's intellectual recognition of this truth. It is a consecrated migration; a severing of the fetters of this lower world with a view to what lies beyond it.

Uncompromising Rejection

In the Qur'anic portrayal¹⁰ of Abraham's argument with, and defiance of, his father we find that affirmation of the truth takes precedence over veneration of one's elders and the conventional beliefs and customs of one's people. Although Abraham remains respectful, even compassionate, towards his father as such, his denunciation of idolatry knows no compromise. In reaction to his son's perceived insubordination, Abraham's father commands, "Dissociate [yourself from] me. . . ." (*uhjurnī*: the imperative form of the verb *hājara* from which is derived *hājara*, to emigrate). Abraham's response, "And I will withdraw from [all of] you and all that ye invoke besides Allāh. . . ." represents an extension of the purely social connotations of *hijr* to a concept embracing the spiritual plane and hence to the idea of hijra.

Hostile Estrangement

Abraham's separation from his people is neither mollified by any nostalgic good will nor dulled by indifference. It is a principled severing of

⁸ S. 19:41-50; 37:99. Translations of Qur'anic verses in this article are my own.

⁹ S. 37:99. Nearly identical language is used by Abraham's nephew, Lot, upon following his uncle into exile: "Verily, I am an emigré unto my Lord" (*innī muhājirun ilā rabbī*) S. 29:26.

¹⁰ S. 19:41-50.

relations rooted in angry, God-fearing indignation.¹¹ In a pertinent verse the Patriarch addresses his people, declaring, "We are innocent of all that ye worship besides Allāh; We have rejected you and there has arisen between us enmity and rancor until you believe in Allāh alone."¹² Hijra in this sense is comparable to the drawing of the lines for a battle which allows of no neutrality despite the fact that the foe are his own next of kin.

Iniquitous Expulsion

The bellicose stance of the emigrant is further justified by another important idea: the fact of his having been forced to flee. It is not merely the voluntary exile of a conscientious objector; it is the flight of a man who has been given an ultimatum, who has been unjustly evicted from his home. In the Meccan sūra *Ibrāhīm*, this notion of banishment is generalized: "And those that disbelieved told their [divinely sent] messengers, 'We will surely expel you from our land unless you return to [the tenets and rites of] our religious community.'"¹³

Singleminded Sacrifice

Abraham obviously had an affection for his father but this was not allowed to stand in the way of his righteous separation from him and all he stood for. The hijra as an offering of one's whole being to God requires constancy unswayed by sentimental considerations or attachments to worldly advantage. The example of the wife of Abraham's nephew, Lot (Lūṭ),¹⁴ demonstrates this need: any looking back is to invite destruction. The sacrifice must be absolute with no second thoughts.

Blessed Delivery

Finally, the hijra in the tale of Abraham is the vehicle of twofold salvation and reward. On the one hand, it was a miraculous escape from

¹¹ It is worth remembering that the general order for Muslims in Makka to emigrate to Madina was issued at about the same time as the verse allowing Muslims to wage war against their oppressors. See 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *Al-Strat al-Nabawiyya*, M. Hrās, ed. (Cairo, 1971), 1: 79-80; S. 22:39.

¹² S. 60:4. This sūra, which is prefaced by a commendation (to Muslims) to follow Abraham's example, was revealed in Madina and is not only an invitation to emigrate but also a battle cry.

¹³ S. 14:13. Similarly, the inhabitants of Sodom say of Lūṭ and those that shared his beliefs, "Drive them out of your township, verily they are people who strive to be pure!" (S. 7:82) In this context we might also consider the Qur'anic account of the Prophet Shu'ayb: "The leaders of the arrogant among his people said, 'O Shu'ayb, verily we will expel thee and those that believe with thee from our township unless you truly return to [the tenets and rites of] our religious community!'" (S. 7:88).

¹⁴ S. 7:82; 29:26. It is worth noting that both these verses and also verse 60:4 referred to previously were revealed in Makka at a time when some Muslims had already emigrated to Abyssinia. These verses would seem to serve as an encouragement to the persecuted to flee to safety rather than to resist.

human persecutors and resettlement in a well-provided land;¹⁵ on the other, it was a rescue from the divine retribution which is visited upon evil communities and at the same time a liberation from the bondage of worldly attractions and thus a means of gaining access to eternal bliss. The supreme trust in providence required by the hijra is never betrayed. The sacrifices and trials of pious emigrés are not in vain: the ultimate triumph is theirs in both this world and the next.

Etymological Considerations

Long before they found expression in the form of geographical displacement of Muslims, a number of the concepts implicit in the Islamic hijra were embodied in Qur'anic verses addressed to the Prophet. In one of the early Meccan sūras the Prophet is enjoined to patiently endure the abusive language of his oppressors and to dissociate himself from them in a "dignified manner" (*wa-hujruhum hajran jamīlan*).¹⁶ Here we find the imperative form of the verb *hājara* with its accompanying verbal noun *hijr* used with the conventional social implications of a deliberate, though not necessarily permanent, abjuration of social interaction and verbal communication with a particular person or party. Such *hijr* is a kind of withdrawal which offers relative protection both from further abuse and from the danger of answering in kind.

In another early Meccan sūra, the same verb is employed with a similar connotation but with wider ramifications: "And [as for] impurity, shun [it]!" (*wa'l-rujza fa-hujur*).¹⁷ In this verse the shunning implied in the verb *hājara* denotes far more than a momentary stance; it defines a permanent attitude, in this case that of avoiding impurity whether this be envisioned on the moral, ritual or doctrinal level.¹⁸

The above outline of Qur'anic references should be enough to put would-be analysts on their guard against making any simplistic interpretations concerning the Islamic concept of hijra. In light of the diversity—and complex, interpenetrating nature—of the ideals and attitudes which underlie the Qur'anic depiction of Abraham's hijra, it would be surprising if the emigration of the Prophet and his companions were a static, unidi-

¹⁵ S. 21:71

¹⁶ S. 73:10.

¹⁷ S. 74:5.

¹⁸ In both of the above examples it will be noted that the verb *hājara* is a transitive verb which requires a specific object, either a person or thing. On the other hand, *hājara* (the third form of the same root) is an intransitive verb implying a movement towards a place of emigration (*mahjar*) which may be merely understood or else stated after the preposition *ilā*, "towards". The verb *hājara* retains the implications of its root meaning of "to solemnly shun or reject" but carries them a step further by translating them into spatial movement and physical separation.

mensional entity. A careful review of select primary sources confirms this supposition beyond expectations.

The Historical Hijra

Al-hijrat al-ūlā, "The First Flight"

The flight to Abyssinia, which preceded the general emigration to Madīna, is a good place to begin our discussion. For while this earlier hijra across the Red Sea did not include the Prophet and was of a temporary nature, those who undertook it were motivated by many of the same factors as later emigrants (*muhājirūn*; sing: *muhājir*) to Madīna. At that time, the leaders of Makka's idolatrous majority were employing every possible means to make the Prophet and his followers either revert to "the religion of their forefathers" or at least be more respectful of it in their stated convictions. In the face of the venomous zeal¹⁹ of their persecutors and given the obvious futility of organized armed resistance, which had not been divinely sanctioned in any case, the Prophet gave his companions permission to emigrate, encouraging them to seek asylum in the dominions of the Christian king, al-Najāshī, of al-Ḥabasha who was known to be magnanimous and just.²⁰

This first emigration is early evidence that Islam commanded neither passive martyrdom nor suicidal resistance. While the early Meccan sūras frequently enjoin the believers and the Prophet himself to endure their oppression with patience and confidence in ultimate triumph,²¹ this suffering is not depicted as an end in itself. Those who die at the hands of their persecutors are promised high stations in paradise, yet this kind of

¹⁹ It should be pointed out that many of those who emigrated to Abyssinia were not in danger of being tortured or physically attacked since they belonged to Meccan clans that would not violently persecute their own members for following the Prophet and were powerful enough to ensure that no other clan did so. Nevertheless, such emigrants had undoubtedly been the victims of severe social ostracism and the psychological trauma of witnessing the suffering of fellow Muslims who lacked similar tribal protection and who are often referred to as "the weak ones," *al-musta'ḍ'afīn*. For these high-born Qurayshi Muslims, the hijra was less a flight from direct persecution than a flight from the horror of the oppressive campaign being waged against their co-religionists in Makka at that time. It was also a means of liberating oneself from reliance on the protection of idolatrous clansmen who in many cases took part in the active persecution of weaker Muslims.

²⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat* 1: 280-86; Abū 'Abd Allāh Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* (Beirut, 1985), 1: 203-5. The first source gives the number of *muhājirūn* as 83 men. Among these emigrés was 'Uthmān b. 'Affān and his wife Ruqaiya, the Prophet's daughter, concerning whom the Prophet is reported to have said "Verily, the two of them are the first to have emigrated to Allāh—the Praised, the Exalted—since Lūt." (Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 8: 36; this ḥadīth is without *isnād*.)

²¹ S. 23:111; in this Meccan sūra God rebukes those who rejected Muhammad's message and ridiculed his companions of whom He says, "Verily I have rewarded them this day for all that they patiently endured and it is they who are the triumphant."

martyrdom is not viewed as an especially favored means of salvation.²² Thus, those who recant their faith under torture while maintaining their inward convictions are not to be condemned.²³ The sacrifice expected of Muslims is more realistic: confronted with irresistible *fitna*,²⁴ they have the right and at times even the duty to distance themselves from it geographically with all that this entails of renouncing worldly ties and goods.

In the case of the muhājirūn to Abyssinia, one must not underestimate the courage and detachment they evinced. To renounce the personal security afforded by bonds of kinship, especially in that age, was a bold step indeed. To risk forfeiting, possibly forever, titles to property and customary means of livelihood could not have been easy for many of them. Yet, giving up all these they counted as an acceptable price to pay for the freedom to openly profess and practice Islam. It is thus that this hijra was not merely a running away from an intolerable situation; it was a defiant exteriorization of an inward choice of the hereafter over the herebelow, of spiritual companions over profane kinsmen and family, of divine revelation over tribal customs and conventional beliefs.

Notwithstanding the sincerity of conviction which propelled the emigrants to seek refuge across the Red Sea, indefinite residence in Ethiopia was not among their intentions. Illustrative in this respect is the return to Makka of a number of the muhājirūn upon receiving erroneous news of the Prophet's having converted the leaders of the Quraysh.²⁵ Some of these stayed on in Makka and after some time were encouraged to emigrate to Madīna.²⁶ Most of them, however, finding themselves subject to even harsher oppression, were obliged to make second emigration back to the Muslim community in Abyssinia. Subsequently, a group of these returned to Arabia when they learned of the Prophet's intended emigration to Madīna while the rest remained in al-Ḥabasha seven or eight years longer until the Prophet wrote to al-Najāshī asking him to arrange for them to be returned to Arabia.²⁷

²² There are comparatively few Qur'anic examples of passive martyrdom, the most salient being perhaps that of the believers, usually interpreted to be referring to the Christians of Najrān, whose immolation is memorialized in sūra al-Burūj.

²³ S. 16:106.

²⁴ Fitna: major temporal upheaval, such as civil war or religious persecution, or source of spiritually corruptive disequilibrium.

²⁵ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* 2: 12-13; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1: 205-8. Among those who returned to Makka and stayed there until the emigration to Madīna were some of the most eminent companions including 'Uthmān b. 'Affān and his wife, Zubayr b. 'Awwām, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf.

²⁶ Abū Salmah b. 'Abd al-Asad al-Makhzūmī was the first of the returned emigrants to Abyssinia to seek refuge in Madīna. He reached Madīna about a year before the oath of 'Aqaba. His wife and son were prevented by her own clan from going with him. (Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 2: 80; Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 239-40).

²⁷ These muhājirūn (among whom were 'Alī's brother, Ja'far) rejoined the Prophet while he was engaged in a military campaign against the Jewish strongholds of Khaybar and were allotted a share in the war spoils although they had not taken part in actual fighting. Why the

Being fundamentally a foreign land—linguistically, culturally and spiritually—Christian Abyssinia, though preferable to idolatrous, intolerant Makka, did not possess the requisite traits to ensure the growth, stability and sovereignty of an Islamic community. Therefore, in the flight to *al-Ḥabasha*, all the emphasis is on fleeing “from” and “with” rather than “to.” That is, from persecution, from danger, from evil; and with one’s life, with one’s faith intact, with one’s doctrinal and moral integrity. Comparatively little stress is laid on fleeing “to except as an inevitable consequence of the need to flee “from” and even the “from” is not embodied in an intention of sworn and irrevocable dissociation from Makka²⁸ as was later the case with the emigration to Madīna. The destination, apart from its positive aspect of safe haven, did not constitute a final objective and therefore commanded no absolute allegiance.²⁹ It was Madīna that was destined to provide the muhājirūn with their unmistakable “to.”

Al-Hijra al-Nabawiyya, “The Prophet’s Emigration”

In the emigration to Madīna one can perceive the workings of divine inspiration, on the one hand, and the Prophet’s pragmatism and foresight on the other. Although the divine command for the Messenger to set off to Madīna was a sudden occurrence, even on this level there seems to have been a gradual unveiling of Allāh’s plan as the following ḥadīth suggests: “I saw myself in a dream emigrating from Makka to a land rich in date palms. I was alarmed that it might be al-Yamāma or Hajar but it turned out to be Yathrib [i.e., Madīna].”³⁰

The great emigration unfolded in measured stages. As with transplanting seedlings, the Muslims in Makka were not displaced without first taking precautions to improve their chances of survival. The new soil had to be tested and then carefully prepared. The first phase began with the Prophet’s preaching to pagan pilgrims from Yathrib; it culminated when a sufficient number of them embraced Islam and swore an oath of fealty

Prophet chose to keep these Muslims in Abyssinia so many years after his own establishment in Madīna is a tempting field for speculation. It may partly be explained by the fact that, until the signing of the treaty of Ḥudaybiya, the coastal regions of western Arabia may not have been safe for their landing

²⁸ Nor could it have been in light of the Prophet’s continued residence in Makka during this period which marks precisely the pivotal difference between the first hijra and that to Madīna.

²⁹ Nevertheless, the emigrants living in Abyssinia had an attachment to its ruler, al-Najāshi, which seems to have been based on more than mere self interest. This is suggested by the great joy they reportedly felt at his victory in a local power struggle; see Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 1: 291-92.

³⁰ Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Sahīḥ* (Istanbul, 1979), 56: 24; al-Yamāmah and Hajar are both place names in the Arabian Peninsula about which there is some disagreement as to their location. See al-Hamawī Yāqūt, *Muḥṣan al-Buldān* (Beirut, 1955-57).

(i.e., *Bay'at al-Aqaba*) to him which included the pledge to protect him and his followers with their lives. This pledge among other things meant that the Muslims in Makka could at last renounce the protection of pagan guardians. It will be recalled how, after the death of Abū Ṭālib, the Prophet lacked a strong protector and, for example, upon returning from his futile mission to Ṭā'if, he felt compelled to accept the protection of a high-minded but idolatrous Bedouin notable. The same was true for a number of other companions including Abū Bakr.

The second phase of "preparing the soil" involved the dispatch to Madīna of two learned companions to instruct the new converts in the tenets and practice of Islam and to win over others. To extend the analogy of transplanting even further, one might compare the Muslims of Madīna (*al-anṣār*, "The Allies in Victory," often rendered: "The Helpers") to sturdy plants cultivated to act as supports for the relatively weak seedlings that were to come. It should be pointed out, however, that even among the native inhabitants of Madīna we can find attitudes which reflect those of the muhājirūn. There is a Ḥadīth to this effect: "And there were emigrants from among the anṣār since Madīna [too] was an abode of polytheism."³¹ The story of Sa'd b. Mu'adh's conversion³² is a case in point: He had been an idol-worshipping tribal leader in Madīna who, after some initial resistance, embraced Islam and then promptly swore that he would speak to neither the men nor the women of his clan until they followed his example—which they all did before nightfall. His oath is reminiscent of the act of dissociation termed *hijr* noted above.

The actual movement of people from Makka to Madīna was similarly a gradual process. To avoid alerting their Qurayshī antagonists, the emigrants were obliged to make the journey individually or in small bands on a staggered timetable. Even so, not all those who wished to seek refuge in Madīna were immediately successful in doing so since their idolatrous kinsmen in some cases went to great lengths to hold them back. Between the arrival of the beginning and end of this initial tide of muhājirūn of mostly Meccan origin, which included the Prophet, there elapsed a period of about two months.³³

³¹ Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, 7: 144; numbering of volumes and pages is based on *Fahāris Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, Abū Yahya al-Qawīynī, ed. (Beirut, 1988). There is an interesting case of a native of Madīna, Ziyād b. Labīd, an early convert to Islam from the Khazraj tribe, who took up residence in Makka and later "emigrated" back to Madīna thus qualifying him to title of both muhājir and anṣārī (See Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 598.).

³² Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 2: 58-60.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3: 239-40.

The Hijra As Proof Of Faith

With the emigration of the Messenger, which requires no detailed re-telling here,³⁴ and his subsequent installation in Madīna, the concept of hijra underwent a major change. From being a praiseworthy alternative to enduring persecution, the emigration became a touchstone of faith, a proof of the sincerity of one's conversion to Islam. It was the physical corollary of the double testimony of faith. Hence, the Qur'anic expression *muhājirūn il'ā 'Ilāhi wa-rasūlihi* ("emigrating unto Allāh and His Messenger").³⁵

In light of the Prophet's own example and his presence there, Madīna came to be viewed as the embodiment of the spiritual aspirations of every true believer. In addition to its aspect of refuge, Madīna was now the point of entry into a community based on shared faith. Both ideas are reflected in the encouragement the Prophet is reported to have offered to those who could emigrate: "Verily Allāh, the Omnipotent, the Omnipresent, has brought forth for you brethren [in faith] and an abode in which you will be secure."³⁶ The Prophet's establishing legal bonds of brotherhood between each early emigré and one of the anṣār was a demonstration of the far-reaching nature of this integration into a new social order founded upon divine revelation and prophetic guidance.³⁷

Given the spiritual advantages which residence in Madīna offered, the emigration came to be regarded as a dividing line between faith and hypocrisy. This is clearly the message of the Qur'anic verse in which believers are exhorted not to establish close relations with those who claim to be Muslims "until they emigrate in Allāh's cause."³⁸ The sincere Muslim of that period had every reason to emigrate (unless, of course, the Prophet had ordered or permitted otherwise) and little excuse for electing not to do so. According to the Qur'ān, those who fail to flee when given

³⁴ See Martin Lings, *Mohammed: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (London: Allen and Unwin/Islamic Texts Society, 1983), 118-24; for the finest English narration of this event

³⁵ S. 4:100.

³⁶ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat*, 2: 80; this ḥadīth is cited in this source without a proper isnād, a common practice in *sīra* literature.

³⁷ An indication of this realignment of values is the stress laid on the honorary names *muhājirūn* and *anṣār* rather than on tribal affiliation in both the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. While pride in lineage and kinship ties continued to play an undisputedly important role in the lives of the Arabs, on the level of ideals the concept of honor as being identified with one's place in the early history of Islam rather than with one's tribal roots was still very powerful. A relevant reflection of this is found in an account of 'Abdullah b. 'Umar's chiding someone for referring to a Meccan Muslim in terms of his tribal lineage saying, "Quraysh! Quraysh! We are the Emigrants!"; Ibn Shabbah, *S. Tā'rikh*, 2: 488.

³⁸ S. 4:89. See also S. 8:82.

the opportunity cannot then justify their eventual infidelity to Islam by claiming to have been oppressed:

Verily those whom the angels cause to die in [a state of] wrongdoing their own souls [are addressed by angels] saying: "In what [difficulty] were you?" And they respond, "We were made weak on earth." [To which the angels] say, "Was not Allāh's earth vast so that you might have emigrated therein?" Hell is the resting place of these and what an evil destination it is!³⁹

Likewise, there are a number of ḥadīths which stress the virtual obligation of resettling in Madīna for Muslims at that time; among them the following which seems to focus on the hijra as an expression of creedal solidarity: "Do not live among the polytheists and do not gather with them, for whoever gathers with them is like unto them."⁴⁰ Another Ḥadīth underlines the temporal disadvantages of living apart from the *umma*: "Whoever resides among the polytheists is no longer protected by any covenant of protection (*dhimma*)."⁴¹ This latter ḥadīth is made even more explicit by a Qur'anic verse which states that those who believe in Islam but have not yet emigrated are not covered by any guarantee of protection until they do so.⁴²

Questions of Intention

The above observations should not lead to the conclusion that the hijra was simply a change of residence. The mere fact of removing oneself geographically to Madīna, especially in the case of later emigrants, was not in itself definitive proof of the purity or loftiness of one's motives. The moral and spiritual intent of the true emigration is expressed in the following much-cited ḥadīth:

Actions are [to be judged by God] according to the intention [behind them] and a man will have [reward for] what he formulates an intention for. So whoever's emigration was for [the sake of] Allāh and His Messenger, his emigration will be [counted] for [the sake of] Allāh and His Messenger; and whoever's emigration was for [the sake of] some worldly gain or for marrying a woman, then his emi-

³⁹ S. 4:97.

⁴⁰ Abū 'Isā al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Madīna, 1964), no. 1655; see also Muḥammad al-Albānī, ed., *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, [selection from the ḥadīth compilation of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī] (Beirut, 1986), no. 4045 and 6149.

⁴¹ Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, *Kaḥīr*, Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 6073. Note: in subsequent references to al-Albānī the reader may assume that he has classified the ḥadīth in question as *ṣaḥīḥ*, as in this case, unless noted otherwise.

⁴² S. 8:72.

gration will be [counted as being] for [the sake of] that for which he emigrated.⁴³

As in the case of most solemn formulations of intention, that of hijra for later emigrants was frequently embodied in a sworn oath (*bay'ah*) given to the Prophet.⁴⁴ The binding nature of this oath is revealed in the following incident: An Arab Bedouin came to Madīna and swore an oath of fealty to the Prophet which included the pledge of emigration. The next day he had come down with a severe fever common to visitors to the oasis and he asked the Prophet to release him from his pledge so that he could return to the desert to get well, but the Prophet refused. This happened three successive times and in the end, when the febrile nomad disobeyed and left the city, the Prophet commented on Madīna's power to purify itself of unworthy elements.⁴⁵

The importance of the geographical aspect of the hijra to Madīna also reveals itself in the negative implications of reverting to one's former place of residence. Just as the root verb *hājara* carries the idea of a definitive and sworn relinquishing of social ties, so the verb *hājara* meant an irrevocable rejection, shunning of pre-Islamic ignorance (*jāhiliyya*) and all that represented it. Thus, even when the muhājir no longer had to fear persecution in his native land, to return there to live without imperative cause was regarded as a movement in the direction of apostasy. In the case of Arab Bedouin emigrants, unauthorized return to the desert and resumption of the un-Islamic ways of the nomadic tribes⁴⁷ was viewed in very grave terms. In two separate ḥadīth, such backsliding (*al-ta'arrub ba'd al-hijra*, or, *al-ruju' ilā al-ā'rubīyya ba'd al-hijra*) is classified as a major sin (*kabīra*) alongside *shirk* (doctrinal or ritual association of other beings or things with Allāh).⁴⁸

The injunction against resettling in Makka for the muhājirūn originally from there was particularly explicit even after it became part of the Muslim realm and despite the fact that it was the most sacred shrine of Islam. Several ḥadīths⁴⁹ restrict such an emigrant to a maximum residence of three days in Makka after the performance of greater or lesser

⁴³ al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 83:23, Abū 'l-Ḥusayn Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, M. Fu'ad, ed. (Cairo, 1963), 6: 48.

⁴⁴ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Cairo, n.d.), 3: 429-30.

⁴⁵ al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 30: 10; Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 4012.

⁴⁶ It bears pointing out that in Islam this type of strict dissociation with another Muslim (called *hajr*) is normally limited to a period of three days.

⁴⁷ The connection between hijrab and the settling of nomadic bedouin is a central theme in Webster's study of the early Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia: Roger Webster, "Hijra and dissemination of Wahhabi doctrine in Saudi Arabia," in *Golden Roads*, 11-27.

⁴⁸ Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, *ʿAṣṣat* in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 4606, "Ḥassan". Al-Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 145, "Ḥassan."

pilgrimage. When one of the muhājirūn was struck down by a fatal illness in Makka (after its conquest by Muslim forces), the Prophet expressed his regret and made the following prayer: "O Allāh, fulfill the emigration of my companions and do not make them go back [on their intention]." ⁵⁰ In a similar anecdote, another emigrant upon falling ill in Makka begged the Prophet to pray for his recovery so that he would not die "in the land from which [he] had emigrated." ⁵¹ The irreversible nature of the self-exiling intention of the hijra is exemplified by the Prophet himself who was adamant about returning to Madīna, often referred to as *Dār al-Hijra*, after the pacification of his hometown, Makka, despite the hopes of his kinsmen that he would choose to stay with them there.

In addition to the stress laid on the intention of hijra as a decisive separation "from" a particular locality, there is also significant emphasis on the intention of hijra as a definitive attachment "to" one's *mahjar* or "place of emigration." This is reflected in the relative blameworthiness of leaving Madīna of one's own volition to take up residence elsewhere without just cause. Madīna, as destination of the great hijra, was the embodiment of a spiritual goal and to abandon it for worldly reasons might imply an abandoning of those original aspirations and intentions. In addition to suggesting infidelity to religious ideals, the desire to leave Madīna also indicated indifference to or ingratitude for the spiritual benefits guaranteed by the Prophet to the faithful who live and die in his peerless city. ⁵²

Another aspect of the hijra as a total consecration of oneself to God and His Messenger lies in the relative precondition of freedom. The emigration of a slave, for example, posed particular problems since from a certain point of view a slave's life was not technically his or hers to consecrate in this way. On one occasion a man came to the Prophet and swore an oath of allegiance including hijra. The Prophet had not realized the man was a runaway slave and when his owner came to claim him the Prophet felt obliged to give him two slaves in exchange. The anecdote concludes by commenting that from that time on the Prophet always verified that the intending emigrant was not a slave. ⁵³ A similar principle was applied in the case of married women emigrating against their husbands' wishes: their liberation from the bonds of marriage had to be purchased by returning their dowries to their husbands. ⁵⁴

⁴⁹ al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 58: 46; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, no. 957.

⁵⁰ al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 58: 49.

⁵¹ Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 145.

⁵² See Daoud Casewit, "Fadā'il al-Madīnah," *Islamic Quarterly*, 35, no. 1 (1991): 5-22 for a more detailed treatment of the virtues of Madīna and the conditional blameworthiness of leaving it.

⁵³ al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, no. 1644.

⁵⁴ al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, *Kitāb al-Shurūt*, 15. According to Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwatta'* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Ulūm, 1988), no. 1155; the female emigré is considered divorced from her unbelieving husband if he fails to enter Islam and join her within a prescribed period.

Finally, as regards intention, the hijra as outcome of iniquitous expulsion and as expression of hostile estrangement had its actively belligerent aspect. The total emigration did not stop at passive resistance or righteous self-defense: it included heroic striving against the enemies of Islam. Not surprisingly, the Qur'an frequently links the notion of *hijra* and *jihād*.⁵⁵ Both are regarded as proofs of the sincerity of one's faith as both required a spirit of detachment based on a consequential discernment between the Absolute and the relative as discussed above. In this light, let us consider the Qur'anic verse, "Verily those who have adopted the faith and those who have emigrated and striven [in holy war] in God's cause, they are those who hope for God's mercy."⁵⁶ Another pertinent verse is the following:

Those who have emigrated and have been driven from their homes and have suffered harm in My cause and [those who] have engaged in battle and have been slain, verily, I will cause them to enter into gardens beneath which rivers flow as a reward from the presence of God. . . .⁵⁷

The Privileges and Spirit Merit of the Emigrants

As is indicated by the foregoing verse, the hijra, in view of the courage and commitment involved in its undertaking, was regarded as the door to great spiritual merit. Hence, the Prophet's exclamation: "Be ye strongly urged to undertake the hijra for it is beyond compare!"⁵⁸

This merit translated itself into an elevated status for the muhājir already in this world. Among the privileges of emigrés was preferential treatment by the Prophet in the allotment of land, particularly that seized in war from the Jewish tribes of Madīna.⁵⁹ Similarly, in view of their poverty, the emigrants are singled out in more than one Qur'anic verse as being lawful and recommended recipients of obligatory alms.⁶⁰ On another plane, for the muhājirūn along with the anṣār was reserved the prerogative of praying in the front row in the Prophet's mosque.⁶¹ Seniority in hijra was one of the criteria for deciding who should lead a group in prayer and who should have precedence in burial.⁶² It was also

⁵⁵ Masud, "The obligation to Emigrate," in *Muslim Travellers*, 32, makes this same observation. See also Webster, "Hijra and Dissemination," in *Golden Roads*, 11.

⁵⁶ S. 2:218.

⁵⁷ S. 3:195. Other relevant verses include 8:72,74,75; 9:20; 16:110.

⁵⁸ al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 7: 145; al-Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 4228.

⁵⁹ Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidi, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, Marsden Jones, ed. (London: 'Alam al-Kutub, 1966), 1: 378-79.

⁶⁰ S. 8:59; 22:24.

⁶¹ Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Saḥīḥayn* (Aleppo/Beirut, n.d.), 3: 303. (Hyderabad reprint).

⁶² Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:26, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'*, no. 8011.

a factor in determining the level of state pensions established during the caliphate of 'Umar.⁶³

Naturally, the reward for emigrating was not limited to earthly advantages as the Qur'ān reminds us: "[As for] those who have emigrated for [the sake of] Allāh after having been persecuted, we will surely provide them with excellent lodgings in this world; and truly the reward of the hereafter will be greater if they but knew!"⁶⁴ No doubt, it was this reward that the Prophet had in mind when he commented on the lucrative nature of the deal struck by a wealthy Muslim merchant of Byzantine origin, called Ṣuhayb b. Sinān, who traded all his riches for the freedom to emigrate from Makka to Madīna.⁶⁵ It is to Ṣuhayb that the following Qur'anic verse is said to refer: "And among mankind is he who purchases himself seeking the pleasure of God. And God is full of benevolence towards [His] devotees."⁶⁶

This benevolence is especially directed towards the final ends of those who emigrate in good faith. In a ḥadīth, the initial muhājirūn are depicted at the gates of paradise where the guardian angels ask them if their deeds had been weighed to which they respond, "O Lord, and wherefore should our deeds be assessed when we removed ourselves [from our homes in Makka] and [willingly] left behind family and possessions and offspring?" At which point Allāh fashions splendid wings of gold and mother of pearl for each one of them with which they soar into paradise.⁶⁷ Even greater assurances of celestial compensation are promised in the Qur'ān to muhājirūn who meet their death away from home.⁶⁸

Among the virtues of the emigration to Madīna elaborated in the ḥadīth is its absolving power. The hijra was tantamount to a rebirth, spiritually speaking, since it offered the possibility of cutting oneself free of one's baggage of past sin: "Verily, [embracing] Islam effaces [all sin] which preceded it and the hijra effaces [all sin] which preceded it."⁶⁹

⁶³ Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, 3: 282

⁶⁴ S. 16: 41

⁶⁵ Ibn Hishām, *Strat*, 2: 87; Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, 3: 227-28 Ṣuhayb had apparently come to Makka as a poor man but had amassed a great fortune there. He embraced Islam but was prevented from leaving Makka by a group of the Quraysh who were loathe to let him take such wealth with him. When he offered to trade his gold and silver for the liberty to depart for Madīna, they accepted. When the Prophet heard of this, he commented, "[How] Ṣuhayb has profited!" (*raḥiḥa Ṣuhayb, raḥiḥa Ṣuhayb*). Ṣuhayb was one of the last, along with 'Alī, of the original wave of emigrants from Makka to reach Madīna

⁶⁶ S. 2:207; Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, 3: 229

⁶⁷ al-Ḥakīm, *Afustadrik*, 3: 399

⁶⁸ S. 3:195; 4:100; 22:58.

⁶⁹ The Prophet addressed these words to Khālīd b. al-Walīd and 'Amr Ibn al-'Aṣ who after years of actively fighting Islam came to Madīna as Muslims and emigrants seeking his intercession to secure God's pardon for their former misdeeds; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1: 78-79; al-Wāqīdī, *Maḡhāzī*, 2: 745; Ibn Hishām, *Strat*, 3: 174. In the last two sources the ḥadīth is cited without proper isnād.

It is worth highlighting the way in which the "initial emigrants" (*al-muhājirūn al-awwalūn*) are singled out in the Qurʾān and ḥadīth for special reward. These are distinguished, according to one source,⁷⁰ from the "latter emigrants," *al-muhājirūn al-ākharūn*, by the fact that the former reached Madīna before the change of *qibla* from Jerusalem to Makka. Because of the greater risks they took and the greater sacrifices they made, the earlier emigrants are viewed as having demonstrated a purer intention. They are therefore accorded more honor and merit than those who sought refuge in Madīna in later years. In a similar vein, another ḥadīth differentiates between poor and rich *muḥājirūn*, granting the former entry into paradise "five hundred years" before the latter.⁷¹ Poor emigrants were those that brought no wealth with them to Madīna and may thus be presumed to have evinced a stronger reliance on God than those who had reserves to fall back on.⁷²

Other Modes of Hijra

As the theocratic state in Madīna grew in numbers and strength the concept of hijra underwent further modifications, particularly as applied to new Bedouin converts. The desert tribesmen who flocked to Madīna, especially after the signing of the Truce of Ḥudaybiya, were no longer obliged to adhere to such a geographically strict intention of emigration. In some cases, the Prophet authorized them to return to their homelands even after they had made the intention of emigrating.⁷³

In other cases, the Prophet offered them a choice between two different types of emigration: *al-hijrat al-hādir* ("the settling emigration") and *al-hijrat al-bādi* ("the nomadic emigration").⁷⁴ The former, also termed *al-hijrat al-iqāma* ("the emigration of residence"),⁷⁵ is equivalent to the conventional conception of emigration entailing indefinite settlement in Madīna. The latter type of emigration, also referred to as *al-hijrat al-raʿā*⁷⁶ ("the emigration of return"), is differentiated from the first in that, after an unspecified but relatively short stay in Madīna, it allows the temporary emigré to go back to his place of origin under oath to serve in Muslim

⁷⁰ Ibn Shabbah, *Taʾrikh*, 2: 491

⁷¹ at-Tirmidhī, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 4228.

⁷² This is obviously a relative question since both Abū Bakr and ʿUthmān, the first and third Caliphs respectively were among the richest emigrants upon arrival in Madīna.

⁷³ In one anecdote, a bedouin convert who had at one time been resident in Madīna returned to the desert and a nomadic way of life. Later he met up with a group of companions at the time of pilgrimage who asked him if he had reneged on his vows to which he replied in the negative explaining that the Prophet had given him permission to live among the wandering Arabs. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 6:27.

⁷⁴ al-Nasāʾī, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 7053.

⁷⁵ Ibn Shabbah, *Taʾrikh*, 2: 484-85.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

military campaigns when summoned and to obey orders and injunctions come what may.⁷⁷

Although the first type of hijra, also referred to as *al-hijrat al-bāna* ("the established emigration"), is stated to be greater in reward than the second, there seems to have been no blame attached to electing the short-term emigration. The Prophet's instructions concerning the offers to be made to unbelievers before engaging them in lawful jihād contain reference to both kinds of hijra. If they accept Islam, they are to be invited to emigrate to Madīna (*al-tahawwul min dārihim ilā dār al-muhājirīn*) which bestows on them the rights and duties of emigrants; if they decline to emigrate, they are to be informed that their condition will be like that of nomadic constituents of the Islamic polity (*ka-a'ṣāb al-muslimīn*) who are subject to Islamic law and who are only entitled to a share in war booty if they actively engage in jihād alongside the Muslims.⁷⁹

In some cases the Prophet actually discouraged would-be muhājirūn from settling definitively in Madīna. It is tempting to speculate about the reasons for this change of policy. It may partly be explained by concerns for the greater good of the community in wishing to spare it the burden of hosting incongruous elements or too large a number of indigent emigrants. No doubt it was realized that unchecked migration to Madīna would pose more of a liability than an asset because of not only the limitations of food supply and pasturage but also the fickle nature of Bedouin loyalties. On the positive side, having loyal followers in the desert steppes had its strategic as well as spiritual advantages.

In Rajab of the fifth year after the hijra, the Prophet is reported to have told a deputation of a particular Arab tribe, "You are emigrants wherever you are, so return to your lands!"⁸⁰ Likewise the Prophet began to refuse the requests of tribesmen to have him mark out a permanent mosque site for them in a settlement within the oasis of Madīna as he had done for groupings of earlier Arab emigrants; instead, on one occasion, he informed them, "My mosque is your mosque, you are my nomadic wasteland and I am your sedentary site, and yours is the obligation to respond if I summon you [to take part in a military campaign]!"⁸¹

Another reason for inhibiting a prospective emigré might be related to what the Prophet perceived to be spiritually opportune in the case of a particular individual. The emigration entailed hardship and sacrifice that

⁷⁷ al-Tabarānī, *Kabīr*, in al-Albānī, *Saḥīḥ*, no. 1132.

⁷⁸ al-Nasā'ī, in al-Albānī, *Saḥīḥ*, no. 7053; al-Tabarānī, *Kabīr*, in al-Albānī, *Saḥīḥ*, no. 1132; Ibn Shabbah, *Ta'rikh*, 2: 285-86.

⁷⁹ Muslim and Ibn Hanbal, in al-Albānī, *Saḥīḥ*, no. 1078.

⁸⁰ Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, 1: 291.

⁸¹ Ibn Shabbah, *Ta'rikh*, 1: 78.

was not demanded of every Muslim. In an illustrative ḥadīth the Prophet was asked about the hijra by a nomad whereupon he answered, "Woe unto you, verily the emigration is a difficult undertaking. Do you have camels of which you give in alms?" The Bedouin responded in the affirmative and the Prophet advised, "So [carry on] doing this in the vast, distant plains for truly Allāh will not neglect anything in [rewarding you for] your deeds!"⁸² The intending muhājir might also be turned away by the Prophet with a view to the accomplishment of a higher or more fundamental duty: On one occasion a man came to the Prophet and said, "I have come to swear allegiance to you [with the intention of making] the hijra and [my fervor is such that] I have left my parents weeping [over my departure]." To which the Prophet replied, "Go back [to your parents] and cause them to be cheerful just as you have caused them to weep!"⁸³

The End of the Hijra

With the extension of Muslim control over Makka and the subsequent pacification of the greater part of the Arabian peninsula, there was no longer any urgent need for Muslims to emigrate to Madīna. Indeed, numerous ḥadīth proclaim *lā hijra ba'd al-fath*, "There is no hijra after the conquest [of Makka]."⁸⁴ The closing of the door of the historical hijra is aptly summed up by one of the Prophet's wives, ʿĀ'isha bint Abū Bakr, who is reported to have commented along the lines of the above ḥadīth:

There is no more emigration today. [There was a time when] one of the believers would flee with his faith unto Allāh, the Exalted, and unto the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, out of fear that he would be persecuted. But nowadays, Allāh has plainly caused Islam to dominate and today [a believer can] worship his Lord wherever he wishes. But [there nonetheless remains] holy war and intention [as a means of proving the sincerity of one's faith and earning spiritual merit].⁸⁵

Such ḥadīth would seem to indicate that the hijra to Madīna, particularly following the death of the Prophet, had lost its imperative meaning and was no longer a means of asserting one's unconditional attachment to Islam nor of earning special merit. Still, there is justification, even on a

⁸² al-Bukhārī, *Ḥadīth*, 24: 35.

⁸³ al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 7: 143, Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:3, narrates a similar ḥadīth in which an anonymous man wishes to consecrate himself to hijra and jihād seeking celestial reward. The Prophet asks him if either of his parents are alive and is told that both are still living. Then after confirming that the man's aim is reward from God, he orders him, "Go back to your parents and provide them with goodly companionship!"

⁸⁴ al-Bukhārī, *Ḥadīth*, 52:194; Sulaymān Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan Abi Dā'ūd* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), no. 2480. Also see al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, nos. 7563 and 3437.

⁸⁵ al-Bukhārī, *Ḥadīth*, 58:44.

purely historic level, for viewing things in a less rigid way both as regards hijra to Madīna and hijra as such. The conditions which gave rise to the original emigration to Madīna in the Prophet's lifetime have inevitably manifested themselves in subsequent ages. Thus we find, only a few decades into the Islamic era, in the time of civil strife during which the Caliph 'Uthmān was murdered, a Meccan muhājir feeling obliged to emigrate back to his former homeland, exclaiming, "O God, verily I fled with my religion from Makka to Madīna and [now] I am fleeing with it from Madīna to Makka!"⁸⁶ Indeed, the term hijra has been evoked time and again, even in our day, by Muslims to describe their flight from oppression of one sort or another.⁸⁷ Such a notion of an indefinite possibility of hijra, geographically and historically speaking, seems to find support in a ḥadīth which declares, "There will be hijra after hijra. . . ."⁸⁸

At the same time, there is a deeper level of hijra which is not indissolubly linked to geographical displacement. This is clearly the implication of the following anecdote. During the caliphate of 'Umar there was a terrible drought and thousands of Bedouin came to Madīna as refugees. When the rains finally came, 'Umar went out among the hordes urging them to return to their respective areas of origin telling them, "Emigrate [truly] and do not make pretense at being of the muhājirūn!" [*hājarū wa lā tahājarū*].⁸⁹

Concluding Remarks on the Historical Hijra

While the hijra of Islam refers first and foremost to the emigration of the Prophet and his closest companions from Makka to Madīna it would be a gross oversimplification, as the above discussion demonstrates, to reduce it to this one event. From the asylum-seeking of Meccan Muslims in Abyssinia to the settling down of Bedouin tribesmen in Madīna, the hijra was a multifarious phenomenon even in the Prophetic age. Indeed, the various modes of emigration of the first generation of Muslims manifest both changing circumstances and the multifaceted concepts of which the hijra is a crystallization. These same concepts as we shall see find expression in other less literal modalities.

⁸⁶ Ibn Shabbah, *Ta'rikh*, 3: 1128-30.

⁸⁷ Concerning the obligatory nature of hijra and its interpretation by various jurists and political leaders through time see Masud, "The Obligation to Emigrate," in *Muslim Travellers*.

⁸⁸ The ḥadīth in question is in praise of Syria, "the blessed land to which Abraham emigrated." Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, no. 2482.

⁸⁹ Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, 3: 324. A further indication of the changed status of rural Arabs who settled in Madīna in later years is the following: 'Alisha asked the narrator what they called people of small rural communities who settled among the inhabitants of Madīna without there being any kinship links between them. He answered, "We call them louts and waste scraps (*al-'ulūj wa l-asqāt*)" to which she responded, "We used to call them *muhājirūn* in the time of the Prophet. . . ." in al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Saghir* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Kutub ath-Thiqafiyah, 1986), no. 129.

The Metaphorical Hijra

Since the hijra embodied such essential Islamic ideals, it is not surprising that some of the Prophet's companions equated it with an essential condition for attaining salvation even after it was no longer an option. At least one ḥadīth appears to corroborate this idea: "None shall enter Paradise except he who has emigrated."⁹⁰ Another ḥadīth implies without any qualification that hijra, like jihād, is obligatory upon Muslims.⁹¹ This state of affairs would be a cruel irony if the emigration did not have its equivalents in actions and attitudes that were not the monopoly of only one generation of Muslims.

Jihād as Hijra

One of the companions who had accepted Islam only after the pacification of Makka was informed that only those that had emigrated would gain entrance into Paradise. Obviously distressed, he went and asked the Prophet about this and received the following reassurance: "There is no hijra after the conquest of Makka but [there remains] jihād and [good] intention."⁹² In a related ḥadīth, the Prophet spells out the articles of faith (*īmān*) and is then asked what sort of faith is the best to which he responds, "Al-hijra."⁹³ Then to the question, "And what is al-hijra?" he replies, "That you shun evil." And when he is asked, "And which hijra is best?", the Prophet says, "Al-jihād."⁹⁴ Thus, jihād (literally "struggle" or "effort") appears as the active counterpart or continuation of hijra. For-saking evil and error is only half of what is expected; it must be accompanied by sincere efforts in the direction of establishing the good and living according to the truth. This striving is typically associated with holy war.

In equating emigration and holy war, we have an aspect of hijra which is not restricted to a particular time or a particular grouping of Muslims. Holy war, too, involves uprooting oneself from home and family and enduring hardships for the sake of faith. It is in the sense of the continuing possibility of earning the emigrant's reward that the following ḥadīth are to be understood: "Verily, the hijra will not come to an end as long as there is jihād"⁹⁴ and similarly, "... as long as the infidels are being fought."⁹⁵

The waging of jihād need not be understood exclusively in the sense of outward military confrontation, for there is also a "greater holy war" to

⁹⁰ al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 7: 145-47 and Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 3: 401.

⁹¹ Ibn Ḥanbal, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 3342.

⁹² Ibn Shabbah, *Ta'rikh*, 2: 482-83.

⁹³ 'Abd b. Humayd, *Al-Muntakhab min Musnad 'Abd b. Humayd*, Sāmīrā'i and Sa'īdī, eds. (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1988), no. 301.

⁹⁴ Ibn Ḥanbal in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 1991.

⁹⁵ Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Nasā'ī in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 5218.

be fought with the unconverted elements we carry within ourselves. The following ḥadīth lends itself to this interpretation:

The best of the believers in terms of soundness of submission [*islāman*] is he from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe, and the best of the believers in terms of faith [*īmānan*] is the best of them in moral conduct, and the best of the muhājirūn is he who has renounced that which Allāh, the Exalted, has forbidden, and the best [fighter of] jihād is he who strives against his [lower] self for the sake of Allāh's essence, be He magnified and glorified.⁹⁶

This conception of sincere effort, jihād, is particularly applicable in cases where a Muslim remains faithful to the pillars of faith in spite of difficult outward circumstances: "[Constancy] in worship in [the midst of] fitna⁹⁷ is like the emigration unto me."⁹⁸ The scope of this tradition is by no means limited to the companions of the Prophet or even to men who have the privilege of waging a military jihād. A more explicit ḥadīth rules that whoever perseveres in the practice of the pillars of Islam is assured of paradise whether "he emigrated in the cause of Allāh or stayed put in the land in which he was born."⁹⁹

Righteous Intention and Practice as Hijra

As several of the ḥadīths cited above indicate, hijra has its equivalents not only in the domain of action (i.e., jihād), but also in that of intention (*niya*). Instead of a geographical direction, this concept of emigration rests on a moral and spiritual orientation, an inward resolution of forsaking definitively that which is forbidden. It is this moral conversion that is implied in the following ḥadīth which concerns the deeper meaning of the emigration: "The [true] Muslim is he from whose word and deed [literally, tongue and hand] the Muslims are safe, and the [true] muhājir is he who shuns [*hajara*] that which Allāh has forbidden."¹⁰⁰ In another ḥadīth the true emigrant is he who "shuns offensive acts [*khaṭāyā*] and sins."¹⁰¹

This conception of hijra is closely linked to the idea of repentance (*taṭvba*) which implies formally dissociating oneself with one's past, infidelity, and a penitent acknowledgment of the misguided nature of one's former behavior and belief. *Taṭvba* is analogous to the emigration in the

⁹⁶ al-Tabarānī, *Kabir*, in al-Albānī, *Sahīh*, no. 1129; my rendering of the latter part of this unquestionably profound ḥadīth (i.e., *man jahada nafsahu li dhāti 'llah*) is not the only interpretation but one I feel is justifiable

⁹⁷ Cf. footnote 24.

⁹⁸ Muslim, *Sahīh*, 8:208; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, no. 2201

⁹⁹ al-Bukhārī and Ibn Ḥanbal in al-Albānī, *Sahīh*, no. 5925

¹⁰⁰ al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 2:4 and Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, no. 2481

¹⁰¹ Abū 'Abd Allāh Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, in al-Albānī, *Sahīh*, no. 6658.

sense that both comprise two complimentary movements: a turning towards [what God has ordained]—hence a consequential discrimination—and a turning away from [what God has prohibited]—hence an uncompromising rejection. Furthermore, it is a door open to all, irrespective of historical circumstances. In the words of the Prophet: "The hijra will not come to an end until repentance comes to an end, and repentance will not come to an end until the sun rises from its place of setting [i.e., until the Day of Resurrection]."¹⁰²

In summary, we have seen that the concepts underlying the hijra are linked to inward attitudes and intentions which remain pertinent even when the outward necessity or possibility of physical emigration is absent. It now remains to discuss the central devotional manifestation of these concepts which, like the original hijra, is expressed in geographical movement: the pilgrimage to Makka (*al-ḥajj*).

Pilgrimage as Hijra

The ḥajj, like the hijra, is a consecrated migration, an uprooting and severing of ties for the sake of faith. The pilgrim is drawn into a sacred flow in which, momentarily, all is left behind and the only destination is God and His Prophet. In this sense, the already cited Qur'anic expression "*muhājīran ilā ʾllāhi wa-rasūlihi*" might be applied to the pilgrim, just as it was applied to the emigrant. From a certain point of view, the first part of this movement—towards God—is represented by the prescribed pilgrimage to Makka while the second part, the movement towards the Prophet, is embodied in the supererogatory visit (*ziyāra*) to the Prophet's city, Madīna which is discussed in fuller detail below.

The ḥajj may be likened to the hijra in other respects as well. Just as the Prophet saw an extension of hijra in holy war, he recognized ḥajj as a type of jihād.¹⁰³ Similarly, hijra is equated with *tawba* the two movements of which are actualized in the sacred journey to the Makka. The opportunity offered by the ḥajj for intense repentance and pious resolution to mend one's ways is such that those who perform it correctly (*al-ḥajj al-mabrūr*) are assured of paradise as their reward.¹⁰⁴ According to another relevant ḥadīth, he who performs ḥajj with a pure intention returns home as free of sin as when his mother first gave birth to him.¹⁰⁵ Let us recall that the hijra, too, was comparable to a rebirth in this respect.

¹⁰² Abu Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, no. 2479, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 7469.

¹⁰³ "What an excellent jihād is the pilgrimage!" (al-Bukhārī, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 6769). Other ḥadīth would indicate that this equivalence is principally applicable to women and those men too weak to wage holy war (e.g., "The pilgrimage is the holy war for every weak person." Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, no. 2902.)

¹⁰⁴ al-Tabarānī, *Kabīr*, and Ibn Ḥanbal in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 3170.

¹⁰⁵ al-Bukhārī and al-Nasā'ī, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 6197.

Ziyāra as Hijra

Although the allusions to this are not as explicit in the primary sources, the visit to Madīna—as an extension of the pilgrimage and in its own right—also reflects features of the hijra. The ziyāra to the Prophet's city, though not strictly obligatory,¹⁰⁶ is rarely omitted by any pilgrim. To do so would be subjectively comparable to neglecting the second testimony of faith, to a deficient reverence for the Prophet one of whose names is *al-Ḥabīb* ("the Beloved"). It is thus that the journey to Madīna, like the emigration, is an expression of love for the Prophet. A ḥadīth says: "Not one of you truly believes until I am dearer to him than his father, his son and all mankind."¹⁰⁷

If today Muslims are no longer able to emigrate or, except in rare cases, even to earn the emigrant's reward through jihād, a visit to Madīna permits them to reaffirm and deepen their love for the Prophet and his illustrious companions of whom many thousands are buried in or near the city. Ideally, this "holy tourism" includes visiting their graves, praying where they prayed and meditating on their sacrifices and devotion. And it is this affection for one's spiritual forefathers which in itself, according to a well-known ḥadīth, may be a vehicle of salvation.¹⁰⁸

The visitor to Madīna (*zā'ir*; pl: *zuwwār*) is in a number of ways comparable to the "temporary emigrant" of the Prophetic age. The central feature of the latter's stay in Madīna, was meeting the Prophet and swearing an oath of allegiance to him which included an affirmation of his attachment to Islam. Similarly, the high point of the ziyāra, and in fact the act from which it derives its name, is the visit of the Prophet's tomb. This visit takes place in a section of the mosque known as *al-Muwājahha*, which might be translated "the face-to-face audience chamber." It is here that the *zā'ir* conveys his greetings to the Prophet just as if he were alive before him.¹⁰⁹ In addition, most traditional formulas of greeting for this

¹⁰⁶ For an argument (by a medieval Māliki jurist) in favor of regarding the visit to the Prophet's tomb as a *de facto* obligation on the pilgrim see Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Shifā' al-Siqām fi Ziyārat Khayr al-Anām*, (Beirut: Dār al-'Afaq al-Jadīdah, 1978).

¹⁰⁷ al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 2: 8.

¹⁰⁸ And through this love they have hopes of being counted among their betters in the sense suggested by the following anecdote: A man stood before the Prophet and said, "Oh Messenger of Allāh, when is the Hour?" at which the people pulled him and made him sit down. Yet he rose again and asked the same question and was again made to sit down. When he did this for the third time, the Prophet retorted, "Woe unto to you, what have you prepared [of good works] for [the Hour]?" to which the man replied, "Love for God and His Messenger!" Then the Prophet told him, "Sit, for verily you will be with those you have loved." The narrator of the ḥadīth then related the extreme joy of the companions at this saying of the Prophet adding, "And I hope to be with the Prophet and Abū Bakr and 'Umar by virtue of my love for them even if my works fall short of theirs." (al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 5:14; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:42).

¹⁰⁹ A ḥadīth reads: "No Muslim greets me but that Allāh restores my spirit to me so that I am able to respond to him." (Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, no. 2041).

occasion include affirmations of one's belief in the Prophethood of Muḥammad and in the truth of his message.¹¹⁰

For visitors to Madīna, like the "temporary emigrants" in the apostolic age, their stay provides them with the opportunity of strengthening their resolve to live according to Islamic norms and prescriptions. During their stay the visitors immerse themselves in the rhythms and *baraka* of worship in the presence of like-minded fellow-Muslims. It is a chance for spiritual renewal and profound repentance. And just as those Arabs who made "the emigration of return" during the Prophet's own lifetime, these pilgrims carry this new found faith back to their homelands thereby enriching and strengthening the wider community of the faithful.

Hence, we find that even as regards the Prophet's own *mahjar*, Madīna, its function as refuge and magnet for true believers did not end with the conquest of Makka. In addition to its traditional appellation, "*Dār al-Hijra*" (the Abode of Emigration), Madīna is also called "*Dār al-Īmān*" (the Abode of Faith). A significant ḥadīth in this respect is: "By Him in whose hand is my soul, things will revert to how they began; surely all true faith will return to Madīna, just as it began from there, until all true faith will be in Madīna."¹¹¹

Now we have come full circle, for the journey to and sojourn in Madīna is metaphorically to join the same flow of faith which marked the first hijra. The holy city's epithet "*al-Munawwara*" (The Radiant) is surely not unrelated to the eternal significance of the hijra which is in essence a principled movement away from darkness towards light.

*Moroccan-American Commission for
Educational and Cultural Exchange
Rabat, Morocco*

DAOUD S. CASEWIT



VERTICAL PILGRIMAGE AND INTERIOR LANDSCAPE IN THE VISIONARY DIARY OF RŪZBIHĀN BAQLĪ (D. 1209)¹

From the time of the Prophet Muḥammad, the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca has stood as one of the distinctive practices of the Islamic tradition. The *hajj* rituals were in effect preserved by the Prophet from the pagan period, but revalorized through their narrative connection with the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael. In the Muslim mystical tradition, the principal ritual practices of Islam have in general received a tremendous emphasis, often accompanied by an interiorization and meditative evaluation, designed to bring out the inner meaning of ritual. This is certainly true of pilgrimage as it is of prayer, fasting, alms, and profession of faith, to name only the five main ritual duties.² Travelling to Mecca for the pilgrimage month, whether performed only once or for long residence, has been commonly practiced by many Sufis. Until the triumph of Wahhābī fundamentalism in the Saudi Arabian regime established in the 1920s, Mecca was one of the great centers of Sufism in the Muslim world.³

Despite the recognition of the importance of *hajj* in Sufism, certain Sufis have given expression to experiences that cast the visit to the House of God in Mecca in a wholly different light, in which it becomes relatively devalued. In the surprising utterances of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 874), the Ka'ba like any other created thing is totally devaluated in comparison with the overwhelming reality of God. This takes the form of stories that show, not the pilgrim circumambulating the Ka'ba, but the Ka'ba circling around the perfect saint in tribute to his holiness. As he described it, "I was circumambulating the house (the Ka'ba) seeking Him, but when I was united with Him, I saw the house circumambulating me."⁴ Similar stories have been told of others, such as the Persian master Abū Sa'īd ibn Abī al-Khayr (d. 1049).⁵ Sometimes this miraculous apparition

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at a conference on "Holy Land Pilgrimage" at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, in February, 1996.

² On the symbolic significance of the *hajj* among early Sufis, with numerous examples, see Abū Naṣr 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, *The Kitāb al-Luma' fi 'l-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, "E. J. W. Gibb Memorial" Series, vol. XXII (London, 1914; reprinted., London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1963), 166-74.

³ For a discussion of tensions between Sufism and fundamentalism, see my *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997).

⁴ 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Shataḥāt al-Sūfiyya*, Part One, *Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī*, Dirāsāt Islāmiyya 9 (Cairo: Maktaba al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1949), 77.

⁵ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 242.

of the Ka'ba was simply a convenience for the saint's performance of *hajj*. According to a fourteenth-century Indian source, "Whenever Khwājah Maudūd Chishtī was overpowered by the desire to visit the Ka'bah, angels were ordered to bring the Ka'bah and place it before him. The Khwājah circumambulated the Ka'bah and performed the prescribed prayers. The Ka'bah was then taken away."⁶ One even finds non-Muslim figures, such as Gurū Nānak and certain Indian yogis, having the experience of taking the pilgrim's road to Mecca, and then finding that the Ka'ba has come to meet them halfway; in these cases the symbolism has more to do with relativizing Islam as one religion among many, than with the elucidation of the inner sense of the pilgrimage for Muslims.⁷

But in other cases the tension with the primacy of ritual was clear. The trial and execution of al-Ḥallāj (d. 922) was not in fact based on the famous saying attributed to him, "I am the Truth," but followed upon a judgment of heresy for his alleged recommendation that one could perform a substitute *hajj* by setting up a model of the Ka'ba in one's house.⁸ To be sure, there were those who, like the Qarmaṭīs, made the interior significance of rituals such as the *hajj* entirely displace its external practice. It was on the basis of this form of extreme iconoclasm that they sacked Mecca in 929 and seized the famous black stone, in the hope of destroying the pilgrimage ritual; the stone was only restored after ten years, for a huge ransom, when the Qarmaṭīs realized that their raid did nothing to deter the faithful.

Sufis in general did not go this far. While many Sufis such as Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240) recorded some of their most profound experiences taking place in the vicinity of the Ka'ba, for others the very spatiality of the pilgrimage center made it something to relativize. It is perhaps for this reason that Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624) maintained that his experience revealed that the "reality of Muḥammad" (*ḥaqīqat-i Muḥammadi*) would, at the millenium, ascend and unite with the "reality of the Ka'ba."⁹ This formulation

⁶ M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1967), 121, quoting *Siyar al-auliya'*, 42.

⁷ For Gurū Nānak, see W. H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition. A Study of the Janam-Sākhis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 71-72. On yogis, see Kaykhusraw Isfandiār [attr.], *Dabistān-i madhāhib*, ed. Raḥīm Riḍā-zāda Malīk, Adabīyyāt-i Dasāʾtīrī, 1 (2 vols., Tehran: Kitābkhāna-i Ṭuḥūrī, 1362/1983), I: 147 (referring to the yogi Akamnāth); cf. *The Dabistān or School of Manners*, trans. David Shea and Anthony Troyer, reprint ed. abridged by A. V. Williams Jackson (Washington: M. Walter Dunne, 1901), 235.

⁸ See my *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, SUNY Series in Islam (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 69, 106-7, 110. The Dhikrīs of Baluchistan erected their own Ka'ba which is the object of their pilgrimage during the pilgrimage month of Dhū al-Ḥijja; see Mujeeb, *Indian Muslims*, 13.

⁹ Yohanan Friedmann, *Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971), 14-15.

simultaneously saves the sanctity of the Ka'ba as sacred space, while affording an opening for a higher mystical experience that would be personally inaugurated by Sirhindī himself, in his role of "renewer of the second millennium."¹⁰

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) gave expression to the mystical devaluation of the pilgrimage in a memorable Persian *ghazal*.

You people gone on pilgrimage—where do you go? Where do you go?
 The beloved is right here—come back! Come back!
 Your beloved is your neighbor from the house next door;
 what fancy drives you heedless to the desert?
 If you see the formless form of the beloved,
 you will be the fellow pilgrim, the very Ka'ba, and the spouse.
 A hundred times you've gone by this road to that house;
 just once get out of this house and onto the roof!
 If your goal is to see that house of the spirit,
 first polish up the face of your mirror.
 By donning pilgrim garb (*iḥrām*) you escaped from that house,
 so come all the way out of the robe of dignity.
 That house is subtle, do not tell of its signs,
 but give a sign of the lord of that house.
 Where was the bouquet of roses when you saw that garden?
 Where is the pearl of the soul, if you are separate from that ocean?
 Still, may your troubles be your very treasure.
 Too bad you're the curtain that conceals your treasure!
 Tear away the veil from the pavilion of secrets,
 then know yourself: you're a sultan, not a slave.
 You are a treasure hidden in this heap of dirt;
 come forth again, like a crescent moon from the black cloud.
 You, the emperor of the world, the pride of Tabriz, display
 all the shapes of marvel, for you are the spirit's quickener.¹¹

Here Rūmī's emphasis is on mystical self-knowledge, compared to which the physical performance of the pilgrimage ritual is unimportant. Still, for Rūmī this devaluation of the pilgrimage is rhetorical. He does not reject or criticize the pilgrimage except in a metaphorical way, to direct the reader's attention to the inner mystical experience. It is the direct encounter with the divine beloved, the master of the Ka'ba, that is the real goal; the house of the Ka'ba is only a sign to that end. He uses the familiar Sufi repertory of the symbols of transcendence to convey the sense of going

¹⁰ Further on Sirhindī see Marcia Hermansen, "Citing the Sights at the Holy Sights: Visionary Pilgrimage Narratives of Pre-Modern South Asian Sufis," in *Islamic Studies in America: Fazlur Rahman*, ed. Earle Waugh and Frederick M. Denny (Scholars Press, 1997).

¹¹ Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, *Ghazaliyyāt-i Shams-i Tabrizī*, ed. Manṣūr Mushfiq (Tehran: Bungāh-i Matbu'āt Ṣafi-ʿAlīshā, 1338/1960), 269-70.

beyond convention, yet in this poem he still retains the pilgrim's garb (*iḥrām*) as a symbol for transcending the physicality of the world ("this house"). In this respect Rūmī continued a tradition, shared by other authors such as the Ismā'īlī poet and philosopher Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. 1088), who interpreted the various actions and stages of the *ḥajj* pilgrimage as emblems for the process of purification of the soul.¹² Despite this symbolic emphasis, Nāṣir-i Khusraw himself performed the *ḥajj* pilgrimage four times.¹³ Tension between inner experience and the external forms of ritual was a typical feature of Sufi language, but it by no means amounted to rejection of ritual as such. Rather, ritual provided the templates and structures in terms of which inner experience could be articulated.

To the examples given above, which are all fairly well known in Islamic thought, I would like to add the perspective on pilgrimage as given by a Persian Sufi who is only now beginning to be better understood: this is Rūzbihān Baqlī of Shīrāz (d. 1209), one of the most imaginative and powerful stylists in early Sufi literature.¹⁴ In a series of striking mystical texts in Arabic and Persian, he has presented his experiences in a highly reflective language that stresses the need to see God in a visible form, even as it insists that God is beyond form. The key term for Rūzbihān is vision, which can occur either through unveiling (*kashf*) or "clothing with divinity" (*iltibās*); either the divine reality is revealed to sight by unveiling, or else it manifests itself by clothing itself in visible attributes.¹⁵ It is particularly in Rūzbihān's visionary diary *The Unveiling of Secrets* that he displays this supple language for describing inner experience, using the most vivid visual imagery.¹⁶

As far as the aesthetics of space are concerned, Rūzbihān's inner world is largely structured by ascension imagery, modeled on the ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad as mystically interpreted by Abū Yazīd Bisṭāmī.¹⁷ The human soul is also depicted as a bird that flies up to heaven, like a hawk returning to the wrist of the falconer, or like a nightingale returning to the garden. This upward motion of the soul is matched by the birdlike descent of angels, or by the descent of God, comparable to the *simurgh*

¹² Nasir-i Khusraw, *Forty Poems from the Divan*, trans. Peter Lamborn Wilson and Gholam Reza Aavani (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977), 81-82.

¹³ *Nāser-e Khosraw's Book of Travels (Safarnāma)*, trans. W. M. Thackston, Jr., Persian Heritage Series, no. 36 (New York: Biblioteca Persica, 1986), 121.

¹⁴ See my *Rūzbihān Baqlī: Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism*, Curzon Sufi Series, 4 (London: Curzon Press, 1996).

¹⁵ *Rūzbihān Baqlī*, 42-52.

¹⁶ Ruzbihan Baqli, *The Unveiling of Secrets. Diary of a Sufi Master*, trans. Carl W. Ernst (Chapel Hill NC: Parvardigar Press, 1997). Quotations from this text are cited below by section numbers (marked by §).

¹⁷ *Rūzbihān Baqlī*, 108-16.

flying down to earth.¹⁸ While Rūzbihān retains the language of the *hajj* pilgrimage, and the Ka'ba appears prominently in certain of his visions, the force of ascension imagery is so strong in his thinking that it recasts the journey to Mecca into the vertical dimension. The interior landscape dominates and gives meaning to external space.

Rūzbihān's use of spatial imagery can be illustrated by a vision that he records, focusing on the constellation of the Little Bear near the celestial north pole (a deliberate allusion to the "pole" [*qutb*], the head of the hierarchy of the saints). Here is how he describes the experience that follows upon God's manifestation from the "windows" of the polar constellation:

I passed with my conscience through the regions of the created, and my spirit ascended to the heavens. I saw in every heaven the angels of God most high, but I passed them by until I reached the presence. I saw that his creations, the angels, were greater than his creatures on earth; they were performing prayer, witnessing the nearness of the Truth, with voices thundering his praise. Then I rose up to the world of shining light to ask about it, and I was told that this world is called the throne. I trembled through an atmosphere without dimension, until I reached the doors of eternity. There I saw deserts and oceans; I was being annihilated, I was bewildered, vanishing, astonished, not knowing from where the Truth appeared, for there was no where or whence (§20).

This is a narrative of an ascension, with all the classic elements of passing through the heavens, seeing the angels, and reaching the throne of God. It is, far from being a unique event, part of a long tradition of ascension literature with roots going back the ancient near east.¹⁹ Yet for Rūzbihān it is also a landscape "without dimension," with "no where or whence," which he clearly recognizes as non-spatial even as he must use spatial imagery to describe it.

Ascent to the divine presence, like certain anthropomorphic scriptural passages, creates a paradoxical tension with respect to the transcendence of space predicated of God in most monotheistic theologies. J. P. Guillaume has commented on the paradoxical character of the original ascension of Muḥammad in its use of vision to suggest the transcendence of space.

There is something like a third term between the irrepressible and spontaneous need to represent the sacred, and the prohibition against doing so for fear of violating the divine transcendence, by degrading it to the level of sensible reality; the representation of the thing im-

¹⁸ See my "The Symbolism of Birds and Flight in the Writings of Rūzbihān Baqlī," in *The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi, 1992), 353-66; also in *Sufi 11* (Autumn 1991): 5-12.

¹⁹ Ioan Petru Culianu, "Ascension," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1: 435-41.

plies at the same time its non-representability. Here, the compromise is not just an accommodation dictated by considerations of pure opportunity; it opens up into the vision of a radically new space, splendid and bewildering. On this vision rests one of the most powerfully original esthetic effects of the text.²⁰

The same may be said of the visions of Rūzbihān, but in his case the ascension functioned as a resource available at any moment rather than as an unrepeatable paradigmatic event.

An extended passage describing Rūzbihān's visions of the Ka'ba (discussed below) affords an opportunity to amplify the mystical interpretations of pilgrimage. When juxtaposed with the interior landscapes of Rūzbihān's visions, and the ascensional structure that characterizes the majority of his experiences, the visions of Mecca take on an unexpected significance. For Rūzbihān, the "unveilings" that are the subject of his book are intense visions of forms in various localities. He sees God in the most beautiful of human forms, descending daily to Rūzbihān's *ribāʿ* or hospice; he sees Muḥammad and all the prophets and angels in heavenly gardens; and he sees many of the great early Sufi shaykhs, who appear to him in confirmation of his authority. The dramatic tone and visual power of these accounts coincides with a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between symbol and transcendence. Bodily form and landscape are not obstacles to the search for the divine; they are the medium for its manifestation. Place takes on its significance through the visionary process, whether it is a known location such as Mecca or an infinite ocean or desert removed far from ordinary life.

Visions can thus take place in many different "locations," though Rūzbihān might agree that their true place is in what he calls the angelic realm (*malakāt*). While some of his accounts concern visions of the gardens of paradise, and others occur right in the home and hospice of Rūzbihān, the majority take place in landscapes far removed from humanity and its urban environment. Oceans of unlimited extent, filled with surging waves, indicate the powerful psychic forces unleashed in visions. A good example is the following:

I was seeking God most high in the hidden world. The more I sought him, the more intrusion there was from existence and from certain imaginings. I sought God's aid for that, and he made me comprehend his grace, and he expelled my conscience from the regions of exist-

²⁰ J.P. Guillaume, "Le texte sous le texte: les sources du *Livre de l'Échelle* et le thème du *mi'raj* dans l'imaginaire islamique," in Gisèle Besson and Michèle Brossard-Dandré, ed. and trans., *Le livre de l'échelle de Mahomet: Liber Scale Machometi*, Lettres Gothiques (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1991), 48.

ence. I reached the ocean of love, which was vaster than the world. I swam across that until I reached the ocean of knowledge, and I swam across that. Then I reached the ocean of mystical knowledge, and I swam across that, until I reached the ocean of oneness. I swam across that until I reached the ocean of unknowing and magnificence, and I swam across that until I reached the ocean of attributes. Then I reached the ocean of essence, and I was astonished that I lost the reality of the Truth. I settled down for some time. He appeared to me in majesty and beauty. All that I saw was related to his majesty as a drop is to the ocean (§79).

Here the ocean serves as the best available metaphor for transcending space, one that can be traversed repeatedly to convey the transition to new levels. Sometimes he sees himself swimming and diving into the ocean's depths to retrieve divine knowledge, but at other times he is overwhelmed by the waves, drowning in their power.

Then he hid from me and made me enter oceans like air, which had no dimensions. The might of the Truth encompassed me. I saw myself in these oceans like a drop, with no left or right, no before or behind, no up or down. I saw nothing but glory upon glory, power upon power, majesty upon majesty, might upon might, greatness upon greatness, eternity upon eternity, post-eternity upon post-eternity. Then he said from the wombs of the hidden, "This is endless eternity and eternal divine presence" (§110).

Initiatic visions show Rūzbiḥān drinking an ocean, or receiving a glass from an ocean of wine. Altogether the ocean signifies the vast reservoir of spirit that reveals itself in waves of ecstasies.

The oceans in turn are ringed by vast mountains, among which must be counted Mount Sināi, the source of revelation, and Mount Qāf, the Olympus of Persian mythology. It is from the mountain that God, or Moses, or a Sufi master, or a combination of all three, descends, bringing revelation. The mountain is the region of divine inaccessibility; sometimes Rūzbiḥān is the only one to be invited there.

I saw the Truth (glory be to him) on a holy mountain, and he made me approach. The mountain was high, and the Truth had me sit near him, and repeatedly gave me to drink of the wines of intimacy. He graced me in a form that I cannot tell to any of God's creatures. He was unveiled, and the lights of his beautiful attributes appeared from him. The Sufis were on the foothill of that mountain, unable to ascend the mountain. The Truth (glory be to him) called that mountain Mount Greatness (§162).

The mountains are the greatest and most enduring of earthly things; when God manifests his power to them, they shatter and melt away.

Beyond the oceans and the mountains Rūzbihān finds endless deserts, which signify the emptiness of annihilation. This symbolism was common in the writings of al-Ḥallāj, who spoke of "the desert (*maḥāza*) of the knowledge of reality."²¹ The desert likewise serves in the symbolic recitals of the Illuminationist philosopher Suhrawardī as the location for the movement of the soul towards transcendence.²² The desert near Pasa was the scene of Rūzbihān's earliest unveilings. He seeks God in "the hidden deserts above the seven heavens" (§15), because the desert is where God may be found. Rūzbihān emphasizes the transcendental nature of this landscape, linking the desert with the unseen or hidden realm (*ghayb*). "He manifested himself to me in the deserts of the hidden, and he pointed to himself, saying, 'I am yours'" (§77). There are no distractions in the desert. All is empty, leaving only the possibility of encounter with the one that is sought. When Rūzbihān speaks of meditation, he describes it as follows: "The nets of concentration were flung over the deserts of the hidden to trap the birds of the lights of might and the angelic realm" (§169). If the desert is not the site of a rendezvous with God, it will be the place of annihilation of the soul. "In the river bed of pre-eternity there are deserts and wastelands in which dwell the snakes of wrath. If one of them opened its mouth, none of creation or time would escape" (§87).

The Meccan visions (§50-53) belong to the first portion of *The Unveiling of Secrets*, which may be described as a retrospective autobiography written by Rūzbihān in 577/1181-2 at the age of fifty-five. These visions occupy a prominent position in the initiatic sequences that make up the first portion of the book. In the second portion, which is something like a diary maintained for the next eight years, there is just one additional short vision of Mecca (§205). The primary sequence began, oddly for Rūzbihān, with what is clearly a dream, from which he then awakened (the vast majority of his accounts are of waking visions). In the dream he saw a manifestation of the Ka'ba as light. This rather straightforward dream was followed by an extended meditation that took on some of the attributes of a vision. This time he saw the Prophet and his companions in the Ka'ba, and the Prophet gave an unusual confirmation of Rūzbihān's spiritual status. Rūzbihān was led to doubt the vision's veracity, however, by the unusual circumstance that this vision was taking place while he was in the bath after getting up from bed. After seeking God's forgiveness for this doubt that had arisen from his carnal soul, Rūzbihān found that his certainty was restored. He then proceeded to have a really spectacular vi-

²¹ Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al-Tawāsīn*, ed. Paul Nwyia, *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*, 47 (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1972), II:8; cf. also III:1, III:3, IV:1.

²² Shihāboddīn Yahyā Sohravardī Shaykh al-Ishrāq, *L'Archange empourpré, Quinze traités et récits mystiques*, trans. Henry Corbin (Paris: Fayard, 1976), 215, n. 7, and index, s.v. "désert."

sion, in which he saw the Prophet and the archangels near the Ka'ba, calling his name and inviting him to join them in a Sufi dance. Rūzbihān then calmed down for a while, until another ecstasy seized him, and he had another vision of the Meccan sanctuary. Beneath the sand-strewn floor of the sanctuary a door appeared, guarded by the prophet Ismā'il (Ishmael) and the angel Ridwān (who is in charge of paradise); Rūzbihān entered through the door into a vast heavenly garden filled with all the prophets, the angels, and the faithful. It was a veritable infinity.

§50. A Dream of the Ka'ba of Light

I saw what a dreamer sees, as though I were in the sacred enclosure of God most high [in Mecca], and a light unlike the lights of the world was in the center of the mosque. I saw the Ka'ba in the midst of that light, with garments of special light upon it. I never saw the like of it. The brilliance of that light was like the brilliance of the throne. I wondered at the beauty of the house, and the radiance of the mosque. Then I awoke and stood for ablutions, and I entered the bath.

§51. A Vision of Mecca in the Bath

I recalled what I saw in the dream, and I rejoiced in it intensely. I was thinking about the degree of the dream, and what things it could bring forth. It was as though I saw while awake many of the Prophet's companions in the sacred mosque, as though they were separating and joining together. I saw among them the Messenger of God (peace be upon him), as though he were a perfumed sphere of white light. He was taller than his companions, and he wore a garment of wool, with a hat on his head. He had the most beautiful kind of tresses, and his face was like the laughing sun. His aspects were more beautiful than crimson light. He summoned me as he stood behind the [well of] Zamzam, as though he were calling me from far away. He said, "You are the best of my people." I became proud because of what he said, and I wept intensely. After that my state quietened. My carnal self refused to believe me in these unveilings, because I saw them while I was still in the bath. Then I sought forgiveness in my conscience from God from the speech of my carnal self. God most high increased me in certainty, until my heart became strengthened in that which was revealed to me. So my carnal soul fled, as this is customary with this sign.

§52. Ecstasies in the Ka'ba

I stood up after that to shout, and ecstasy overcame me. I saw as though I were in the sacred mosque, and I saw the Prophet, and it was as though he was in a state of ecstasy. He was turning around near the Black Stone, to the left of the Ka'ba, and Gabriel was standing by the pillar near the gate of al-Ṣafā'. Michael was also standing near Gabriel, and Ṣeraphiel was near them both, and a group of an-

gels was standing on the floor of the mosque. I approached the Prophet in a state of astonishment. The Prophet turned toward me and called me by my name. Gabriel called out to me, saying, "Rūzbihān!" He was in ecstasy, and he called out to me again. Michael called out to me, and he also called me by my name. Seraphiel called me by name, and called out to me, saying, "Rūzbihān!" Gabriel was entering ecstasy, Seraphiel was entering ecstasy, and Michael was entering ecstasy. Every one of them left their places to be near the Prophet. I saw the Ka'ba as though it was leaving its place to be near them, and it danced with them. God most high manifested himself to them, and I among them was going into ecstasy and then settling down.

§53. Paradise within the Mosque of Mecca

After that I was veiled for an hour, and I settled down from my ecstasy and the state in which I had been until dawn approached. Then ecstasy seized me, and a man was unveiled to me in the center of the mosque of the sanctuary, as though he were moving sand from the center of the mosque to one side, until a door appeared beneath the sand. That door was opened; he entered the door, and I entered after him. I saw one other man standing behind the door. The first man was Ishmael [son of Abraham and builder of the Ka'ba], and the other was Riḍwān [guardian angel of paradise]. When I entered the door, I saw the garden of paradise and everything in it, its trees, streams, and lights innumerable. In it I saw Muḥammad, Adam, and all the prophets, saints, martyrs, and angels. I saw there a great crowd of the believers. I saw a world such that, if the heavens and earth were thrown into it, no one would find them, because of its greatness and extent. In that world I saw nothing I had seen in this world except light upon light, brilliance upon brilliance, glory upon glory, and kingdom upon kingdom.

The other separate vision of the Ka'ba from the later part of the diary contains an account of Rūzbihān in the sanctuary witnessing God appearing from the interior of the Ka'ba, with the prophets, the angels, and the throne itself circumambulating around it.

Time passed, and I saw the Most High, above the ladders of the world of the throne, and above the throne. I saw him in the world of pre-eternity in the form of isolation. Then time passed, and he called me near, and I answered him repeatedly. Then I saw myself in the sanctuary of the Ka'ba, and the Truth (glory be to him) manifested himself in the interior of the Ka'ba in the form of beauty, glory, and majesty. The Prophet was there with the prophets and the angels, turning around the Ka'ba. I saw the throne as though it descended and walked around the Ka'ba. I found from the Truth that which I found, and I heard what I heard; I cannot reveal these secrets, for they are from the sciences of the unknown, which issue from the

chosen attributes and chosen actions. They are only known to knowers of God who have drunk the oceans of oneness and have known the Truth by the impressions of unknowings, and the sanctification of attributes and the essence beyond the thoughts of the hearts of humanity, from the throne to the earth. God transcends every imagining that is incommensurate with his power (§205).

Although divine transcendence logically defies any spatial relationship, the powerful image of God revealing himself in the Ka'ba, with the throne of God performing circumambulation of the Ka'ba, conveys how such a physical location can act as the site of a theophany. It only remains for Rūzbihān to emphasize that in reality God is "beyond the thoughts of the hearts of humanity."

Like many other Sufis, however, Rūzbihān necessarily places the Ka'ba into a relationship with his mystical experiences. The Ka'ba itself, however, does not have any intrinsic significance apart from those experiences. This is similar to Ibn 'Arabī's observation that places take on special characteristics because of the spiritual concentration expended there by the saints and prophets.²³ In this sense, pilgrimage centers like Mecca are sacred because the holy men have been there; it is not an arbitrary sacredness that draws the holy men. If the Ka'ba can be a means of access to God, well and good, but if other avenues permit the encounter to take place, they will become the locations of vision. Rūzbihān was overwhelmed in his *ribāṭ* by visitations from God every day, as the following account explains:

My mind recalled the story of Moses. I saw him seek nearness to the Truth (glory be to him), his vision of him, and certain lofty stations and noble miracles, as is handed down in traditions. My thoughts vanished, and I said, "God, you transcend relationship with creatures. You gave to Moses these miracles and these stations, and you chose him for perfection. What is the relationship between you and him, in terms of nearness? I too am from the sons of Adam; what have you given to me?" And he manifested himself to me in the form of majesty and beauty, and said to me, "Moses came to me, but I came to you seventy thousand times between the time you lay down and the time you woke up. Each time I removed the veil from your face while you were sleeping, and I awaited your awaking." When I heard that, I was swallowed by crashing waves of the oceans of oneness (§152).

Although beginning with a complaint, this dialogue shifts into an intimate revelation of divine love, which banishes the official standard of prophecy into irrelevance. Under these circumstances, it is evident that the fixed

²³ See *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 72, quoting Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkīyya*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār Sādir, n.d.), I: 98-99

sacredness of Mecca is susceptible to a great deal of variation when juxtaposed to powerful inner visions.

Of what significance, then, are the objective structures of the pilgrimage ritual in Mecca? There is no doubt that pilgrimage itself becomes relativized in the mind of a mystic like Rūzbihān, particularly in comparison with the vertical pilgrimage of ascension. How significant, after all, is the journey to the House of God, when one can actually visit (or be visited by) God? What is the importance of earthly space in comparison with the interior landscape of transcendence? Clearly there is a difference between ordinary pilgrimage and mystical experience. This does not, however, abolish pilgrimage or its significance. Rūzbihān indeed made the pilgrimage to Mecca twice, according to his biographers. If Ibn 'Arabī's account is to be believed, it was in Mecca that Rūzbihān fell in love with a dancer and gave up his position as a shaykh, until God restored him from his folly and the woman became a disciple.²⁴ While on pilgrimage to Mecca, Rūzbihān recited ecstatic verses in Nayrāzā dialect while hanging onto the door handle of the Ka'ba, so that pilgrims swore that he caused the Ka'ba to move.²⁵ After he spent seven days meditating and fasting by the Ka'ba, God addressed him as follows, seven times: "Rūzbihān! Chief of the Poles of the world! Your existence is the pride of hidden past centuries, of future centuries, and of the present!" And a shower of red rose petals cascaded upon him from the Black Stone.²⁶ Later hagiographies portray him not only advising his disciples on their own pilgrimages, but also miraculously appearing with water to lost pilgrims in the desert.²⁷ Pilgrims to Rūzbihān's tomb in Shiraz experienced dreams of the Ka'ba there, and they pointed to an implicit connection between the two holy sites.²⁸ The pilgrimage to Mecca has become, because of its very physicality, one of the foremost metaphors to convey the mystical experience of direct contact with God, beyond all spatial imagination--and that is surely the strongest testimony that Sufis could give to the power of a fundamental religious ritual.

*University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

CARL W. ERNST



²⁴ *Rūzbihān Baqlī*, 3-4.

²⁵ Muḥammad Taqā Dānish-puẓhāh, ed., *Rūzbihān nāma*, Silsila-i Intishārāt-i Anjuman-i āthār-i Millā, 60 (Tehran: Anjuman-i āthār-i Millā, 1347/1969), 113.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 178.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 220-21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE MISSIONARY WORLD

Introduction

The release of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1979¹ initiated serious debate concerning the study of the Middle East, an area up to that time commonly referred to within academic circles as the 'Orient.' Said focuses primarily on the period of European colonization which ensued after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. On the basis of Michel Foucault's discussion about the nature and operation of modern social sciences,² he argues that Orientalism (the study of the 'Orient') has functioned as a systematic discipline producing a unified body of text, a discourse which set the parameters determining what one was (and to some extent, still is) able to say about the Muslim countries of the Near and Middle East. It was a region that had come to be understood within a dichotomy which set the 'East' in opposition to the 'West.' More significantly, the former came to be understood largely in terms of its place within European historical and cultural development. As a result, it came to constitute both an area of study and of colonial conquest.

While it is questionable that the study of the 'Orient' should be understood as functioning in such absolute terms, it cannot be denied that Said's argument has proven a seductive one. It is perhaps no small irony that Said's treatise on Orientalism has, to some extent, come to define the last word on how those who endeavored to study the Middle East during the colonial period went about their business. Many modern-day opponents of Orientalism, by virtue of defining their own discourse in reactionary form, have inadvertently upheld the same 'Orientalist' parameters that they have sought to dismantle, the relevance of anything written or said in the West about the Middle East, historically speaking, being measured largely by a standard of 'either or.' No doubt, other competing discourses which took entirely different themes as their points of departure (e.g., gender, religion, politics, etc.) informed perceptions of the Middle East, whether consciously or not, yet to the extent that

¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

² According to Michel Foucault, modern discourse functions as a 'procedure of knowledge,' 'an instrument to cover it and to master it [and impose] upon it an order' (*Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* [New York: Vintage Books, 1978], 148). For Foucault, the action of discourse within fields of knowledge was not so much about describing reality as it was about producing it, as, through the use of systems of classification, identities became fixed on people, places, things and relationships.

they have been acknowledged, they have often been understood as simply becoming more or less subsumed within the Orientalist one. The relationship between gender-related discourse and Orientalist discourse provides an excellent example of this. One might consider, for instance, the inclination of modern-day critics when examining earlier texts on Muslim gender-relations to isolate passages on male domination outside their original context with an eye towards providing evidence of Orientalist tendencies on the part of the writers. There is a conscious decision by those reflecting on past writings to stress certain aspects of gender-related discourse, ensuring its affinity with the presumed Orientalist one. Yet, discourse on gender during the 19th and early 20th centuries extended beyond a mere concern with the position of women in the 'Orient.' Is it correct therefore to assume that Orientalist discourse entirely dictated the manner in which gender-related discourse came to bear on the subject of Muslim women? How can we understand the function of various discourses when they arrive upon a common subject from different starting points? What happens when they overlap?

The convergence of gender-related discourse with Orientalist discourse on the subject of Muslim women provides fertile ground for exploring such questions. This becomes more evident when one contrasts the differing perspectives of 'Western' men and women based on their particular experiences with the 'Orient.' Bille Melman in her *Women's Orient: English Women and the Middle East*³ suggests that an alternative view of the 'Orient' developed alongside the dominant one of Orientalism, a discourse essentially used by Western women and defined in terms of the position in which they saw themselves within their own society. Even more, she argues, by the very fact of their traveling to the Middle East and outside of their own, generally speaking, middle-class, bourgeois environments, their discourse constituted a break with many traditional notions concerning masculine and feminine domains (thus contributing to changes then occurring within discourse about gender in the West) while bringing about a sense of solidarity and identification with women in 'Oriental' society in a manner that cut across barriers of religion, culture and ethnicity. In other words, Western women emphasized gender differences over those determined by an 'East-West' dichotomy.

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, I wish to explore the possibility that competing discourses existed on the basis of gender within what has generally been regarded as a cohesive and fairly monolithic literature, namely that of Western missionaries. Specifically, I have focused

³ Bille Melman, *Women's Orient: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918 - Sexuality, Religion and Work* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992).

on the literature concerning Muslim women, a good deal being written by both missionary men and women, and as such, providing a useful point of contrast. It was, in fact, the increase in missionary activity directed at the Muslim community which brought about an increase in the number of 'lady missionaries' in the region.⁴ For reasons that will be more fully discussed as we proceed, the Muslim woman was perceived both as Islam's greatest victim and Christianity's greatest hope, the doorway through which an eventual mass conversion might be affected. The need for women missionaries was considered crucial as it was believed that only through them might Muslim women be reached.

Second, I wish to examine the manner in which the two discourses interacted and were respectively affected, particularly the impact of gender-related discourse on Orientalism. Although using different discourses, missionaries of both genders understood themselves as addressing the same subject, and in complimentary fashion. Their convergence around the topic of Muslim women thus provides an illustrative example of how different discourses may overlap where a specific subject matter is concerned. By the late 19th century, one was able to speak of Muslim women both in the terms set by Orientalist discourse as well as those determined by the discourse of gender then being used by Christian women, both at home and in the field. Little distinction was made regarding which discourse was most operative; tenets arrived at in the one often became incorporated within the other in ways that had significant ramifications for both.

Background

I have chosen to focus on Protestant missionary movements, particularly those coming out of the United States and England. Changes in the social role of Christianity in both countries during this period tended to follow analogous paths, particularly as derived from the evangelical movements of the latter half of the 18th century. Furthermore, organized missionary activity was largely dominated by English and American organizations with other national evangelical churches tending to organize their efforts around them. In general, evangelism as a movement, over the course of the 19th century, tended to minimize denominational differences in an effort to present a more unified front. Chronologically speaking, the missionary literature I have looked at was written during the latter half of the 19th and the early part of the 20th centuries, a period when missionary activity in the Middle East first became substantial. Dis-

⁴ In Palestine alone, thirty 'lady missionaries' arrived between 1888 and 1894 to work with the Church Missionary Society as soon as they turned their attention towards Muslims (Richter 1910: 250). Previously, most missionary activity had been confined to the 'Oriental Christian' communities.

tinctions within the literature can be made on the basis of format, of which two types were primarily employed. The first consists of the biographical and autobiographical accounts of individual missionaries, the focus being on themselves as opposed to the people among whom they worked. The second deals more directly with the people whom the missionaries sought to evangelize, focusing more on a particular subject considered relevant to the missionary project. In the case of countries predominantly Muslim, this usually meant Islam (here understood as an obstacle to be overcome) and its perceived role in shaping all aspects of Muslim society. Most significant to this article is Islam's understood relationship to the status of Muslim women.

As noted, missionary men tended to construct their arguments along what were essentially Orientalist lines. In keeping with this, their texts were generally presented in a "scientific" format which traced the history of Islam from its foundation to its then supposed contemporary manifestations of stagnation and backwardness. Missionary women, on the other hand, were informed a great deal, both in terms of what they perceived to be the main problems for Muslim women and in the language that they used, by what I have here termed the "discourse of domesticity,"⁵ a discourse which reflected the way in which both the American and the English defined differences between men and women within their own societies during this period. Stylistically, missionary women were considerably less exacting than their male counterparts, tending to be more anecdotal and more sentimental in their appeal.

These two discourses should not be understood as working in opposition to one another in any conscious sense, and, in practice, complemented each other quite well. The discourse of missionary women served to underscore Orientalist arguments about the backwardness of Muslim society, particularly a belief that the 'Orient' could best be understood in terms of Islam, in this case, the cause of everything wrong with that part of the world. Included in this was the 'oppression' of Muslim women, and in the terms set by the "discourse of domesticity" of the early and mid-19th century, it was Islam which prevented women from fulfilling their most natural roles as 'wives,' 'mothers,' 'helpmates,' and upholders and transmitters of religious and spiritual (i.e., Christian) values. Likewise, the incorporation of Orientalist doctrines connecting Islam with the degradation of Muslim women neatly complemented arguments defending Christianity's role in the elevation of the status of Western women so central to the discourse of domesticity as we shall see.

⁵ The term 'discourse of domesticity' is derived from what Nancy Cott, in her book *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), calls the 'canon of domesticity.'

Missionary Men and Orientalism

In much the same manner as Said contends was the case with such individuals as T. E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell, missionary men utilized a "quasi-scholarly knowledge of the Orient when dealing with or writing about Orientals."⁶ Missionary men, to a noticeably greater extent than their female counterparts, made use of what were Orientalist tenets (though often in unsophisticated fashion) when writing or speaking about Muslim women, providing as it did a pseudo-scientific rationale for whatever contentions they might wish to make. Male missionaries frequently made reference to the works of contemporary 'experts' in the field of 'Orientalism' as well, and Said's contention that Orientalists typically sought the proof of their observations within their own erudite tradition in a manner that never questioned the authority of earlier texts was certainly born out by missionaries. They almost incessantly cited important and well-known Orientalist scholars not to mention other missionaries.⁷ Sources were treated as authoritative and indisputable. Missionaries had not come to the 'Orient' to dispute held truths but rather to change them, and sought to maintain 'Orientalist' notions as a justification for their presence and the need for change. Missionary men spoke of defining 'Oriental traditions,' 'Oriental styles' and 'Oriental psychologies.' Underlying all for them was Islam, understood as defining every aspect of social and historical existence in the 'Orient.' This was a notion especially applied to the status of Muslim women. As one male missionary expressed it, "[the] Moslem type of civilization can be recognized everywhere in the place assigned womanhood."⁸

What distinguished missionaries from more 'scientifically' minded Orientalists was the emphasis they placed on Islam. Prior to Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, the 'Orient' was understood in the West primarily through its connection to Europe as the source of a historical past defined through the Christian faith and the Biblical texts. Islam became defined as the antithesis of Christianity, a "false faith" founded on an "impostor." The event of Napoleon's invasion and the ensuing period of colonization of the 'Orient' by Europe, however, greatly enhanced the West's ability to 'study' the 'Orient' and a system of thought was created for the

⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, 224.

⁷ The strong familiarity and support that missionaries expressed with regard to each other's work certainly lends credence to Said's argument that, contrary to Michel Foucault's contention, individual writers did in fact leave a 'determining imprint' upon the discourse within which they worked (1979, 23). Missionaries were familiar with each other's work to such an extent that what are seemingly the same anecdotes concerning the 'Orient' resurface in numerous texts, often almost word for word.

⁸ Samuel M. Zwemer and Mrs. Samuel Zwemer, *Moslem Women* (West Medford, Mass: Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, 1926), 192.

study of subjects ranging from Sanskrit grammar to Arabic poetry. While its present was still to be understood through its past, it was no longer a past solely defined by Scripture. Rather, it was a past defined in the language of rationalism as an infinite number of possibilities came into being for the 'scientific' examination of the 'Orient.' To some extent the dichotomy of Islam versus Christianity continued to form the underlying basis of the more scholarly Orientalist discourse inasmuch as Christianity was considered to have laid the foundation for Western rationalism. The period following the Enlightenment of the late 18th century, however, saw a weakening in the connection between the scientific and rational pursuit of knowledge and a concern for the truth of Scripture. Protestant missionaries, among others, found themselves continually hard pressed to maintain the necessity of Christian teachings in a 'modern' society based on rationalism. In Enlightenment terms, they emphasized Christianity as the source of all that was best in modern society, and it was only through Christianity that modern society could be maintained in a meaningful way. Likewise, they made a point of noting the non-advancement of the non-Christian 'Orient,' thus maintaining the connection between Christianity and Islam as representative of two very much opposed societies. In similar fashion, the status of Muslim women was contrasted to that of Christian women such that "[the] more Moslem a country [was], the greater [was] the degradation and the inferiority of the female sex."⁹ Muḥammad had, so went the argument, "laid claim to a special permission from heaven to riot in the most unlimited sensuality [compared to Jesus who was] perfectly holy and undefiled [quoted from Beilby Porteus]."¹⁰

While continuing to emphasize the dichotomy between Christianity and Islam, missionaries wrote in a style imitative of those works considered more scientifically and rationally based. In essence, they sought to create a rational discourse on Islam as the antithesis of Christianity. Missionary men, for example, did not hesitate to make use of what was a standard Orientalist cliché in equating the 'Orient' and its inhabitants with the desert, considered representative of its historical barrenness and unchanging quality. It was the desert's relationship to Islam, however, which held special significance to the missionary.

Islam bears on it the imprint of the desert: fierce, defiant, appalling, silent, a land of deceptions and mirages, of glaring light and dark shadow and cruel desolation.¹¹

⁹ Samuel M. Zwemer, *Childhood in the Moslem World* (New York: Fleming H Revell Company, 1915), 84.

¹⁰ Philip C. Almond, *Heretic and Hero. Muhammad and the Victorians* (Wiebaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1989), 68.

¹¹ Zwemer and Zwemer, *Moslem Women*. 26.

This definition of the 'Orient' extended equally to 'Orientals,' the "rovers of the desert. . . [within which] the national character [was] preserved in its primitive simplicity."¹² The cause of this lack of development to the mind of the missionary was the 'Oriental' faith of Islam, unchanged since the time of the Prophet. Its holy book was still "as binding as it [had been] in the sixth century when it was composed."¹³ For the missionary, it was the impact of Christianity and all it educed in the way of progress which would change this. Their desire to change the 'Orient' was, in fact, something which distinguished missionaries from the majority of colonial personnel and Orientalist scholars. As one missionary so succinctly put it, "[t]he outstanding feature of [missionary work] is *Change* [italics his], [whereby t]he immovable East is moved to its depths' [quoted from Lothrop Stoddard's *The New World of Islam*]."¹⁴

As had been the case in pre-Napoleonic Europe, missionaries of the 19th and early 20th centuries identified the 'Orient' primarily in its role as the point of origin for the Christian faith. The 'Orient' was "the birth-place of prophecy,"¹⁵ and, in its timelessness, was considered to have changed little since the days of the Patriarchs. It was, in effect, a living Bible. Likewise, Biblical references were employed when speaking of Muslim women. They were often referred to, for example, as the daughters of Hagar, their status being likened to that of the bondswoman who had been cast out with her son Ishmael (considered the father of the Arabs) by Abraham. It was to the Qur'^{ān}, however, that missionaries searched most frequently for evidence of the degraded status of Muslim women, quoting from it to demonstrate their lowly position relative to that of women in Christian society. The Qur'^{ān}, it was argued, "[violated] the law of love. 'Husbands love your wives,' is a precept of the Gospel, not the Koran."¹⁶ As noted, missionary men were quick to incorporate the latest 'scholarly' convictions concerning the 'Orient' to lend support to their contentions. Particularly relevant to the status of Muslim women were generally held convictions in Orientalist circles regarding the sexually-lascivious nature of the 'Orient,' something missionary men saw as deriving from Islam, which they considered to be built on a foundation of sexual license. Three bodies of evidence were used to substantiate this: historical details of Muḥammad's life, sexual ethics of Islam, and elements of paradise delineated in the Qur'^{ān}.¹⁷ Even when

¹² Archibald Forder, *With Arabs in Tent and Town* (London: Marshall Books, 1902), 10.

¹³ Zwemer and Zwemer, *Moslem Women*, 38.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁵ Rev. Henry Harris Jessup, *The Women of the Arabs: with a Chapter for Children* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1874), v.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁷ Almond, *Herese and Hero*, 56.

it was acknowledged that Islam did not actually endorse sexual libertinism, it was generally held that Islam, despite its strict controls on sexuality, had effectively legitimized promiscuity. This situation had resulted in, among other things, the degradation of women.

Missionary Women and the Discourse of Domesticity

Missionary women utilized a different discourse when speaking of Muslim women, that of gender. To best understand the way in which the discourse of domesticity shaped discussion on Muslim women, it is useful to trace its development, beginning with the early part of the 19th century. As we saw earlier, in both the United States and England it was a discourse utilized primarily by women, particularly those of the middle-class and petite-bourgeoisie respectively, a background shared by the majority of the missionary women working in foreign lands. It was also a discourse which reflected notions held in both societies regarding gender relations. The discourse of domesticity of 19th century America and England developed concurrent with early industrialization, encompassing a set of ideals on womanhood which associated women with the home and domestic activities, what Nancy Cott has called the "canon of domesticity."¹⁸ In late 18th century America,¹⁹ farm households had been largely self-contained productive units, but by the beginning of the 19th century, production had begun to move to the factory. Women's traditional productive work (as in the production of goods that might either be sold, bartered or consumed) diminished in the household. Concurrently in England, the growth in scale of commercial operations concomitant with industrialization saw the mechanization of formally domestic trades and the hiring of women (mostly unmarried) and children to work in factories for cheap wages. In both cases, 'productive work' became increasingly seen as something which conflicted with a woman's ability to perform household chores and more 'womanly' tasks. Where previously the line between 'domestic' tasks and 'productive' ones had been vague, the two now became understood as constituting mutually exclusive spheres of activity. The spheres of the home and the outside world became defined in terms of gender, with women representing the former and men the latter. This was particularly the case with married women whose chief responsi-

¹⁸ Cott, *Bonds*.

¹⁹ Much of what follows here is in many ways particular to the region of New England. Many of the attitudes and notions discussed, however, soon spread to the other colonies in connection with the "Great Awakening" during the middle part of the 18th century. With some qualification, the 'canon of domesticity' perhaps comes closest to embodying a set of ideas which, in their essence, would become shared by the country as a whole.

bilities were now household chores and child-care, tasks identified as a woman's vocation.

In America, the necessity of women overseeing their children's proper development as future citizens of the new democracy was emphasized, a democracy where all classifications of class were theoretically removed in favor of the natural ones such as sex and the achieved ones such as 'self-made' wealth. Likewise, in Britain, the domesticity argument was being pushed as a model of bourgeois respectability,²⁰ and both the Anglican Church and the English revivalist churches sentimentalized the home and promoted a 'domestic religion' founded on the 'moral influence' of mother and wife. In both cases the ideal clashed with the then current reality of the forced factory employment of both women and children. That notwithstanding, by the mid-19th century, in both England and the United States, woman and the home had become synonymous with Christian virtue. Within the canon of domesticity, women became the moral vanguard of society and, in performing their home duties, were considered to be doing what was natural for them as well as realizing a divine purpose.

The Home as Haven

As noted above, missionary women came predominantly from the middle and bourgeois classes, and, not surprisingly, incorporated tenets of the canon of domesticity when writing about Muslim women. Strongly emphasized, for example, was the idea of the home as 'haven,' founded on a woman's love which was both selfless and 'disinterested.' Whereas the husband was obliged to daily leave the home in order to earn a living "among the busy walks of a selfish and calculating world,"²¹ the

female homemaker[s] 'chief duty' [was] 'to gratify the mind and console the heart of man' by rendering his little household sanctum cheerful and attractive.²²

The home was a sanctuary, a separate sphere of love, comfort and compassion where a man could find respite from a harsh and uncaring world. In contrast to the ideal of domestic life in the West, missionary women noted that "Muhammadans" had little concept of what a true home was or could be. Their homes were full of nothing but jealousy, quarreling, and evil talk. One missionary woman went as far as to claim that the Arabic language did not even have a word for 'home' other than that used for 'house,' *beît*, signifying little more than,

²⁰ Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem, Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 4.

²¹ Cott, *Bonds*, 64.

²² Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 269.

a place to spend the night. The word is lacking because the idea is lacking. 'Home sweet home' with all its wealth of meaning is a conception foreign to the average Oriental.²³

The reason given for this was quite simple:

How can it be otherwise when woman, the heart and life of the family circle, [is] in [the Muslim man's] mind because of inherited ideas relegated to the position of prisoner and slave rather than to that of companion and helpmeet?²⁴

Muslim men were somewhat absolved of blame, being viewed as victims of an ideology from which they were incapable of breaking free. Also, it was recognized that men, like women, were not permitted to choose their own mate. It was understandable then if the Muslim male felt little real affection towards his bride, and he needed only to see "the true condition of affairs from a Western, or better still, a *Christian* [italics hers], standpoint. . . [to] realize the larger amount of domestic happiness he himself, [was] losing."²⁵

The Education of Women

Missionary women worked mostly in the area of education, and through their efforts both Protestant and 'secular' day schools and boarding schools were established throughout the 'Orient.' In the canon of domesticity, the education of women was considered of the utmost importance in order to insure that the family be maintained as an agency of moral instruction. In the words of one 19th century American preacher, women needed education that would instruct them "as beings, who [were going] to be wives, and mothers, the first and most important guardians and instructors of the rising generation."²⁶ For a woman, the purpose of a Christian education was to produce the happy 'Christian wife,' 'mother' and 'home-maker,' and in both the United States and missionary schools of the Middle East, women were instructed in reading, writing, sewing and the Gospel.

Two institutions of "Muhammadanism" were largely held responsible for the lack of education among Muslim women: the seclusion of women and child-marriage. Lady missionaries spoke often of how Muslim women, forbidden from leaving their homes, longed to receive guests so that they might hear about the world outside. In spite of the disproportionate amount

²³ Annie Van Sommer and Samuel M. Zwemer, eds., *Our Moslem Sisters A Cry of Need from Lands of Darkness Interpreted by Those Who Heard It* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1907), 28.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

²⁶ Taken from a sermon by John S.C. Gardiner, (1809) in Cott, *Bonds*, 118.

of press they gave it, missionary women were well aware that seclusion was primarily a feature of wealthier families. Ironically, while acknowledging that Muslim women from poorer backgrounds had a greater amount of 'freedom,' they were characterized as being ignorant, and nothing more than mere drudges for their husbands. Considered even worse than seclusion was child-marriage, particularly as it generally precluded the possibility of an education beyond the most fundamental level. Early marriage was seen as terminating a young Muslim girl's education before it had really begun.

It was not only with respect to Muslim women that lady missionaries were concerned with the effects of seclusion, the cause of idleness, monotony and the resultant evil of gossip. Particularly in England, where the domesticity argument had initially been pushed among the middle-class as a case of preferring bourgeois respectability over the extravagance of aristocratic society, there had been increasing concern about women who, though once important contributors to family economies, were becoming "idle, decorative accessories to their husbands, expected to do nothing but supervise servants and fill male leisure hours with gentle chatter and sexual pleasure."²⁷ Education was seen as an elevating factor which supposedly ameliorated the negative effects of a domestic role and thus redefined the status of the woman who remained in the home. What becomes apparent is that lady missionaries were often hard pressed to uphold the connection between the domestic circumstances of the married Christian woman and the prominence lent it. If young Muslim girl students felt somewhat melancholy in anticipation of their impending nuptials, oppressed by a

sadness in the knowledge that a fate similar to that of their older sisters, now married and hidden away, awaited them at the conclusion of their school days,²⁸

the feeling was not entirely lost on their counterparts in the West. As the 18th century French historian Alexis de Tocqueville noted when contrasting unmarried and married women in 19th century America, "the independence of woman is inexorably lost in the bonds of matrimony."²⁹

²⁷ Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 4.

²⁸ Van Sommer and Zwemer, *Moslem Sisters*, 32.

²⁹ Alexis de Tocqueville, "On American Women and American Wives" in *Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women*, Nancy F. Cott, ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986 [1889]), 119

Divorce and Polygamy

In the Muslim world, marriage was considered by missionary women to be motivated purely by self-interest, as illustrated in the following quote supposedly taken from a typical Muslim woman: "We go on the principle of trying to pluck or fleece our husbands all we can while we have the chance, since we never know how soon we may be divorced."³⁰ Frequent divorce and polygamy were seen as a particular problem in this respect. Numerous accounts were given of the many women who had been divorced several times, one lady missionary going so far as to characterize life among "Muhammadans" as an "endless stream of incidents about divorce."³¹ The evils of polygamy were considered self-evident. Missionary women argued that it was impossible for women's love to grow while competing for the affection of a single husband, the circumstances of which nurtured rather passions of hate and jealousy.

It was only through the acceptance of Christianity, they argued, that women were able to realize their proper station and the benefits of the proper domestic home:

Let them substitute for the Koran the teaching of the Christian faith, the faith which alone gives woman her rightful position . . . the place ordained for her by the Great Creator as the 'helpmeet' to man . . . to pour her life in the devotion of love and self-sacrifice whether as daughter and sister, or wife and mother.³²

In the United States and England, a woman's ability to love for its own sake was seen as fitting her more properly for 'Christian benevolence' than men. Women were seen as having a religious inclination that was natural to their temperament. Through them, religion became a matter of the heart,³³ something they claimed Islam neither was nor could ever be. In the discourse of missionary women, it was only through the acceptance of Christianity that "men [were] willing to treat females as equals, and in some respects, as superiors"³⁴ on the basis of an assumed association between women and proper Christian values.

³⁰ Van Sommer and Zwemer, *Moslem Sisters*, 46.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

³² *Ibid.*, 70-71.

³³ The ideal of feminine behavior encompassed the same "Christlike characteristics of redemptive suffering, obedience, and compassion" (Jill K. Conway, Linda Kealey and Janet E. Schulte, *The Female Experience in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century America: A guide to the History of American Women* [New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1982], 165) exalted within the figure of Jesus in Protestant evangelical preaching and worship during the 19th century, particularly in America.

³⁴ Conway, *Female Experience*, 35.

Women and Reform

Women were understood as having a powerful moral influence over the welfare of future generations. During the early part of the 19th century, in tandem with a relaxation of the emphasis on salvation as coming strictly through the saving grace of God, there was renewed stress placed on the utility of human efforts, in both English and American Protestant churches, as a means of achieving the salvation of others.³⁵ Under these conditions, it was a small step for women to go from shaping the moral values of their own children to shaping those of society at large. In England, middle-class women of the evangelical churches, when addressing the concerns of the working class, did so primarily through the language of 'domesticity.' They argued that women did not belong in the factories and were there only out of economic necessity. The wages of men should be increased so that they could fulfill their role as breadwinners which would in turn allow women to return to the home where they belonged. For their part, lower-class women saw the evangelical churches as addressing their more immediate mundane needs. Women working in the factory were sexually vulnerable, many being unwed and pregnant, abused and often in danger of becoming spinsters.³⁶ The situation of women working in factories was not altogether different in the United States, and in both countries, middle and upper-class women in the evangelical churches tried to force men to adopt the same moral attitudes towards women as was presumed of women within the ideology of domesticity. The very qualities which defined their relationship to the home, their superior morality and their ability to care, now justified the need for them to become more involved in the public sphere, up until then considered strictly the preserve of men.³⁷

The involvement of women in both the United States and England in the area of reform would have far reaching effects. 'Domestic' issues became increasingly perceived as part of the public sphere as both government and women converged on similar concerns over the poor living conditions of working-class women. Women began to demand the right to vote in order that they might best fulfill their roles as wives, mothers, and community members. It was woman's virtues, "her instinctive femi-

³⁵ Cott, *Bonds*, 86.

³⁶ The Napoleonic wars, as with the Civil War in the United States, had resulted in there being a disproportionate number of women compared to men (Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*).

³⁷ By the middle of the 19th century, there was a huge proliferation of religiously based women's reform organizations in the United States and England which not only sought to protect 'victimized' women (in much the same manner that lady missionaries sought to 'protect' Muslim women), but also to reform male behavior, most notably in the temperance movement.

ninity, her highest morality that society [needed] to counteract the excess of masculinity that [was] everywhere to be found in . . . unjust and unequal laws,"³⁸ and which thus justified the argument for granting women equal access to education, work and citizenship. Furthermore, to the extent that Christianity was upheld as a preserve of female values, a woman's religious identity endowed her with a certain degree of authority upon which to base these demands.

In the same manner that middle-class women back home sought to use their position within Christianity to justify their involvement in social reform, so lady missionaries sought to justify their evangelical efforts in Muslim countries.

It seemed particularly appropriate that woman, who doubtless owes to Christianity most of the domestic consideration and social advantages, which in enlightened countries she regards as her birthright, should be the bearer of these blessing to her less favored sisters in heathen lands.³⁹

Parallel to the situation of factory girls, victims of the "sin of 'licentiousness' which appeared in the permitted lust of men,"⁴⁰ was that of Muslim women, likewise victims of men who, on account of the morally laxing effect of Islam, felt no constraints in their decidedly immoral behavior. The Muslim male was considered a case of "unbridled fleshly desires," the Muslim woman existing only "to minister to [his] pleasures."⁴¹ In true Orientalist fashion, the "Muhammadan" world was portrayed as one where man was absolute 'master' and woman little more than his 'slave.'

At the same time, Muslim women were seen as having the ability to reform the behavior of Muslim men and Islamic society in general. This belief justified a line of reasoning which sought to win the 'Orient' for Christianity through women.

She exercises a sway that can neither be denied or despised. The lords of creation—and that [Muslim men] feel themselves decidedly to be—yield to their women far more than a casual observer or even themselves imagine If you get the girls for Christ, you get the [country] for Christ.⁴²

³⁸ Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 19.

³⁹ Arabella W. Stuart, *Lives of the Three Mrs. Judsons. Mrs. Ann H. Judson, Mrs. Sarah B. Judson, Mrs. Emily C. Judson, Missionaries to Burmah* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, Publishers, 1875), iii.

⁴⁰ Cott, *Bonds*, 151.

⁴¹ Richter, (1970 [1910]), 27.

⁴² Van Sommer and Zwemer, *Moslem Sisters*, 58.

If such a description seems at odds with the image of the enslaved Muslim wife, it was considered indicative of her truer, innate sense of womanhood which, though perhaps hidden, was fighting to assert itself against the 'shackles' imposed on it by Islam. Through their conversion to Christianity, missionary women hoped that one day 'native' women might eventually bring about the reform of Muslim society. The conversion of women was seen as the path by which Islam would eventually be defeated, for not only were women able to shape the moral values of their children and immediate family members, but those of the nation as well.

Male Dominance and Sisterhood

Missionary women often told of how Muslim men beat their women at the slightest provocation (though firsthand accounts were rarely given). While such accounts certainly worked well within an Orientalist missionary discourse often set out to describe the barbarity and despotism of "Muhammadans," they also demonstrated a more emphatic connection to the incidents being related.⁴³ Desiring to touch upon the sympathies of her largely Christian readership, one missionary woman, having just described the manner in which Muslim men regarded woman as,

a slave, a drudge, and a disgrace, a temptation and a terror, a blemish and a burden, at once the touchstone and stumbling block of human systems,⁴⁴

posed the following question to her female readers: "How would it feel to have this description applied to you?"⁴⁵

Just as the Christian family was founded largely upon the ideal of the 'disinterested' love of women, the ideal of 'romantic' love was generally understood as the basis for Christian marriage. Not surprisingly, missionary women declared romantic love to be a concept alien to Muslims, and were prepared to cite numerous examples in support of their contention. Yet the ideals of romantic and disinterested love as understood in the United States and England presented a paradox for women who still found themselves at the mercy of laws which largely deprived married women of any rights over their property or being. Given the reality of their legal subordination, the ideal of romantic love, when coupled with the womanly ideal

⁴³ Interestingly enough, only a short time previously in England, the institutionalization of male dominance had included among other things, wife-beating, legal so long as the stick with which the woman was struck was no greater in width than that of a man's thumb (Taylor 1983:35).

⁴⁴ Mrs. Samuel M. Zwemer, *The Daughters of Hagar, a Plea for the Women of Arabia* (New York: Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, Reformed Church of America, 1910).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

of disinterested love, presented women with the irony of choosing their own bondage. Attempts were made at mediating what seemed an irreconcilable paradox through the use of the language of constitutional government, whereby the power of men within families was to be exercised only with the consent of the ruled.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, there was little to insure that men lived up to the ideal and by the time of the woman's movement of the late 19th century, too many women found a shared experience in having suffered a marriage subject to the arbitrariness of male privilege. As defined within the canon of domesticity, only women were capable of a pure disinterested love, and it soon became evident that only among their own gender could women find other individuals capable of reciprocating in like fashion. When combined with the circumstances of a mid-19th century all-girls school education and a general pattern of like religious affiliations, "the impulse toward female friendship was doubly forceful."⁴⁷ For lady missionaries, the bonds of 'sisterhood' were even further enhanced by the circumstances of missionary work, providing as it did inspiration in the face of impossible odds, particularly in countries predominantly Muslim where they experienced very little success in winning converts.⁴⁸

'Sisterhood' expressed itself primarily in two ways in the literature of missionary women. One was a kind of protectionism along the lines of 'what can we do to save our sisters?' The other was a barrage of criticism concerning the lack of sisterhood among Muslim women. As discussed above, relations among Muslim women were described as consisting mostly of petty jealousies, allegedly due to the institutions of polygamy and divorce, precluding as they did relationships based on disinterested love. In line with Western notions concerning the malleability of children, the effects of frequent divorce and polygamy were also seen as having a degenerative effect on young girls who, as daughters, imbibed these passions and were,

trained into them, for they constantly hear[d] their parents spoken against and [saw] the jealousy that exist[ed] between their mothers and the wives who ha[d] supplanted them.⁴⁹

As far as lady missionaries were concerned, no love existed between Muslim women on a level comparable to that between Christian women.

⁴⁶ Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 3.

⁴⁷ Cott, *Bonds*, 178.

⁴⁸ Van Sommer and Zwemer, *Muslim Sisters*, 58.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

The Women's Movement Back Home and Secularization

As the 19th century drew to a close, the way women in the West defined themselves began to change. In the United States, concerns about working-class women no longer constituted a domain dominated solely by women of the Protestant middle-class. To begin with, the majority of those working in the factories, many of them immigrants, were no longer Protestant, and it became increasingly difficult to utilize a canon of thought historically rooted in that faith as one of values shared by all women. Likewise in England, religiously based arguments were becoming increasingly undermined by a growing 'feminist' ideology. In both countries, the increasing involvement of women in the social domain coupled with arguments for equality based on a desire for fair recompense for work done outside the home began to erode the unifying theme of domesticity. Women were beginning to argue for equal rights not because they constituted a morally superior segment of society, but as individuals not to be defined first and foremost by their gender. Protestant middle-class women found their self-ordained role as leaders of the women's movement increasingly challenged as others claiming to speak for women argued that, rather than urging "men [to] adhere to the same canon of sexual responsibility that [governed] women,"⁵⁰ double standards based on gender should be eradicated and women permitted greater sexual freedom. In short, feminist notions of sexuality were severing the tie between the women's movement and Christianity.

In many ways, these changes were just part of a general secularizing trend then taking place in both England and the United States, a trend which greatly concerned both missionary men and women. Missionaries of both genders spoke of a "growing tendency towards materialism in the religious sphere,"⁵¹ concerns which extended beyond mere philosophical reflection as it was something experienced concretely in the missions. Both colonial administrative personnel and a growing indigenous elite, while supportive of the educational and medical institutions established by missions, did not necessarily share the religious zeal of missionaries, and were beginning to place increasing pressure on them to secularize their activities.⁵² In spite of this, missionaries maintained that modernization's success was dependent on a concomitant acceptance of Christianity. It was only Christianity, they contended, which would hold its more materialis-

⁵⁰ Cott, *Moslem Feminism*, 42

⁵¹ Maj. Gen. E.R. Kenyon and Rev. Dr. H.V.W. Stanton, "Notes on Africa and the Mohammedan World—The Women's Movement" *The Church Missionary Review*, LXXVI (849) (1925): 351. Published by the Church Missionary Society.

⁵² Thomas O. Beidelman, *Colonial Evangelism: A Social-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 213.

tic tendencies in check. While missionaries noted that there was "undoubtedly some modernism in Islam. . . it was doubted whether it [would be] successful."⁵³ As something indicative of missionary influence, missionaries "[appreciated] the efforts of [Muslims] who [desired] to modernize their system, [showing as it did] that [they had inculcated] what they [conceived] to be a higher morality than any which [they had] ever contemplated."⁵⁴ At the same time, noting a lack of the necessary element of Christian commitment, they were skeptical. "What one wonders," read an article in *The Church Missionary Review*, "is whether they will ever succeed [in these efforts]."⁵⁵

If missionaries felt that Christianity provided the moral underpinning for modernity, it was the canon of domesticity and the manner in which it defined gender relations which provided the linchpin. The developing schism between Christianity and the women's movement was cause for concern among missionaries, both men and women, though the significance it held for each was, in many ways, quite different. As noted earlier, the discourses of missionary men and women, while distinct in fundamental ways, were not mutually exclusive, and missionaries of both genders often incorporated tenets found in the other. Such tenets, however, often took on different meaning when incorporated within the other discourse, and as such, provide points of contrast indicative of the different ways in which missionary men and missionary women understood the changes then occurring in the West.

The Discourse of Domesticity and Orientalism

Missionary men rarely wrote specifically about Muslim women per se and generally presented their predicament as just one of the many things wrong with "Muhammadan" society. Yet while working primarily in the more conventional Orientalist discourse of the day, missionary men often incorporated tenets seemingly more derived from the canon of domesticity. These were set within the context of the dichotomy between Christianity and Islam, and usually supported an Orientalist contrast between what they considered to be two very different types of societies, founded as they were on two faiths completely opposed to each other. Thus, for example, tenets found in the canon of domesticity supported contentions about volition with the assertion that Christianity, falling as it did within the domain of women, was a religion of the heart, as compared to Islam

⁵³ D.S. Margoliouth, "The Present State of Islam." *The Church Missionary Review* LXXVI (849) (1925): 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

which was "a religion of mere form [and] prohibitions rather than spiritual sincerity."⁵⁶

Likewise, for missionary men, the women's movement back home was only one element of the larger problem of a rapidly secularizing Western society, only one aspect of the hypocrisy of the 'Christian' example being set within the United States and England.

[We] protest against the enforced seclusion and non-education of Oriental women, but as a result of their freedom, great numbers of our women are shamefully immodest in dress and demeanor, irreligious and clamorous for political place and power, indifferent to home life and averse to the cares and responsibilities proper to wifedom and motherhood.⁵⁷

More important for missionary men than defining the necessity of Christianity in the Muslim world perhaps was maintaining its necessity in the Western one. Contrasted to Muslim society was the *ideal* of Western society which the male missionary considered Christian mission-life to embody, and the Christian wife as understood within the canon of domesticity was a crucial element of that ideal. Missionary men saw little that was problematic in such an ideal, considering it one which ought to have been easily transferable to the actual living reality of women in the United States and England.

Unlike their male counterparts, missionary women were not so easily able to ignore the tensions inherent in the canon of domesticity which the advent of the women's movement had brought to the fore.⁵⁸ Attempts at justifying the necessity of Christianity in the elevation of Muslim women was equally about asserting the connection between Christianity and the women's movement back home. Like their male counterparts, missionary women viewed efforts to modernize as denotative of their influence and, like their church-going counterparts in the women's movement back home, saw themselves as providing the necessary element of Christian leadership.

Without doubt Christian missions have had much to do with providing the leadership and setting the example in these social reform movements among the women of the Orient.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline of 50 Years* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1987 [1910]), 53.

⁵⁷ Zwemer and Zwemer, *Moslem Women*, 120.

⁵⁸ Interestingly enough, however, most of the more well known 'lady missionaries' or 'missionary heroines' had become widowed early on and had been able to ignore such tensions on a personal level. Even those who were married, however, were in a unique situation, spending a tremendous amount of time working among Muslim women and thus independent of their husbands.

⁵⁹ Daisy Griggs Phillips, "Women and Present-Day Social Conditions in Egypt," *The Church Missionary Review*, LXXVI(849) (1925), 12.

Without a commitment to Christianity, it was held that such efforts would not succeed. One missionary woman noted, for instance, the failure on the part of a committee of Muslim ladies to initiate a girls' school, a committee which, while influenced by contact with Christians and Christian ideals, had neither the leadership nor the qualities of sisterhood necessary for success that came with the acceptance of the Christian faith.⁶⁰ Most telling was how missionary women spoke fearfully of the possibility that, in rejecting Islam, Muslim women might choose a secular path to achieve their goals instead of a Christian one, and one lady missionary went so far as to suggest that Muslim women were not yet ready to discard the very veil which only a short time ago had been the symbol of their oppression.⁶¹

Attempts by missionary women to justify the necessity of Christianity in the 'Orient' often involved the incorporation of notions which, on the face of it, were consistent with Orientalist discourse, as almost all institutions of the 'East' considered oppressive to women were understood as being derived from Islam. If the canon of domesticity characterized women as 'guardians' and 'upholders' of values and traditions related to faith, Islam was understood as a system of belief which by its very essence denied women this crucial role.

The darkest blot upon the prophet Mohammed is the low appreciation of womanhood that led him to embed in the Koran itself legislation that affronts the intellect and heart of womanhood.⁶²

Islam, in true Orientalist form, was seen as an all-determining force. It had blighted womanhood and driven her behind the veil, and even the contempt Muslim men supposedly felt towards women could be understood as a result of Islam's lack of moral rigor.

If missionaries of both genders made use of arguments based on a dichotomy of Islam versus Christianity, the focus for missionary women was always much more specific. Both genders may have been concerned with issues of volition, for instance, but missionary men took the dichotomy of Christianity versus Islam as their starting point, set within the broadest of terms. Missionary women, on the other hand, arrived at this dichotomy within a discourse that had as its point of reference the subject of Muslim woman and her domination by Muslim men. The problem as they saw it was not so much that the Muslim male was 'Oriental,' but rather that he represented the male gender *sans* the ameliorating effect of Christianity.

⁶⁰ G.Y. Holliday, "Awakening Womanhood" in *Daylight in the Harem: A New Era for Moslem Women*, eds. Annie Van Sommer and Samuel M. Zwemer (New York: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1911), 129.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

More significant is that it was demonstrative of an attempt to maintain the viability of gender identities as outlined in the canon of domesticity, identities largely defined through the institution of marriage. When defining the status of Muslim women *vis-à-vis* Muslim men, missionary women evoked this very institution, and in the process, brought to the forefront every fundamental contradiction to be found in the canon of domesticity regarding the status of women in the West. Everything wrong in Muslim society with respect to women—the ability of men to force their seclusion, to marry more than one wife, to have concubines, and to divorce a wife at will—was defined in terms of this institution, and found its correlate in the marital circumstances of Western women. The discourse of domesticity, when applied to the 'Orient,' personified, within the figure of the despotic Muslim male, all the worse fears of women in the West regarding gender relations, particularly as related to marriage.

Variations Within Orientalist Discourse

A particular object of study may be framed within any of a number of possible discourses depending on the author's emphasis, whether arrived at consciously or not. For example, the Orientalist scholar might see a Muslim woman's primary identity as being 'Muslim,' while the feminist scholar might see it as being a 'woman.' It would be hard to deny the general pervasiveness of Orientalist notions on any subject matter related to the 'East.' Other discourses were evident as well however, and it should not be assumed that these were entirely subsumed within the Orientalist one. It is not improper, therefore, to speak of the incorporation of one discourse by another. For the purpose of our discussion, the question then becomes, what impact, if any, did the incorporation of the discourse of domesticity have on Orientalism? My contention is that the incorporation of tenets found in the discourse of domesticity within the Orientalist discourse of missionary men did affect a change which, though subtle, was profound. Missionaries were concerned with Islam's role in shaping the status of women in the 'Orient' and saw it as being analogous to that of Christianity in the West. At the same time, in the United States and England, the canon of domesticity informed a discourse which sought to characterize women of both societies as sharing a common nature. When missionary women employed this discourse, they used a language which encompassed *all* women, defining a common identity across even major social boundaries on the basis of what they considered to be shared experiences.

The very act of defining women first and foremost on the basis of gender and shared experience had important ramifications for the discourse of missionary men. Although essentially Orientalist, it incorpo-

rated the idea of a gender identity shared by all women. Even notions of sisterhood found their way into the male missionary literature as more than one male missionary sought to encourage lady missionaries with the admonishment,

Who will speak on behalf of the women? Who will stand up to save her from the crime and oppression of man? Woman! You must work for *your* [italics mine] own salvation.⁶³

If Muslim women were capable of change, so were Muslim men and Muslim society. It was for the sake of the Muslim people in general that missionaries of both genders so strongly emphasized the need for liberating Muslim women. 'No nation rises above its women,' they argued, in a manner not unlike the women reformists back home. Missionary men continued to work primarily within an Orientalist framework, defining everything in the 'Orient' through its relation to Islam. However, it was not simply the product of an inferior people, a manifestation of 'Oriental' backwardness, but the very thing holding them back. "[T]he social life of Islam, its intellectual backwardness, obtain[ed] not in spite of, but because of the religion of the people (*regardless of race or locality*) [italics mine]."⁶⁴ Notions that 'Orientals' were somehow different by nature become less apparent over time with the continued insistence that Islam was the only difference that mattered. Missionary men still incorporated generalized notions about 'Orientals' and their limitations. These characteristics, however, were no longer seen as being strictly an innate part of their 'Oriental' being,⁶⁵ but rather, and this was key for the justification of the missionary presence in the 'Orient,' something subject to change. As one missionary so succinctly put it,

[One] generation of children trained in the best of our Western civilization, and above all, led to a personal knowledge of Him Who is the Savior of all men and the Friend of little children, would lead these backward races toward progress and enlightenment.⁶⁶

⁶³ Zwemer and Zwemer, *Moslem Women*, 103.

⁶⁴ Samuel M. Zwemer, *Childhood in the Moslem World* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1915), 55.

⁶⁵ As so often implied by such figures as Ernest Renan who saw 'Orientals' as "by nature lacking the desirable qualities of Occidentals" [Said, *Orientalism*, 141], or such writers as Richard F. Burton and Edward W. Lane who often predicated their authority with their ability to 'sympathize' with 'Oriental lines of thought' and 'Oriental habits' (Said). Variations of this kind within Orientalist discourse were often indicative of conflicting ideas about where Western society was and should be headed. Orientalists such as those described by Said often sought to create their "own secular image of eastern exoticism" [Almond, *Heretic and Hero*, 56] where sensuality became something innate to 'Orientals,' something which missionaries, contending as they did that sexuality as defined by divine law was one and the same with natural law, could not afford to allow.

⁶⁶ Zwemer, *Childhood*, 51.

Conclusion

While Said acknowledges that the same social phenomena may be spoken of within more than one discourse, the possibility remains little elaborated upon in his discussion of Orientalism. He does acknowledge briefly the truism of shared human experience, and suggests that scholars working within disciplines defined intellectually (such as feminism and anthropology) were and are able to move past the parameters set by Orientalism. He seems to refer, however, only to those efforts *consciously set outside or against the dominant discourse of Orientalism*. What I have discussed here is not so much 'opposing' discourses which actively seek to frustrate Orientalist notions, but rather a mechanism of change whereby the incorporation of tenets found in one discourse undermine certain fundamental tenets found in another, in many cases, without any conscious application to this end.

Whatever allowances Said might make for individual variation, Orientalist discourse remains for him a fairly determinative force. By his account, those writing about the 'East' (for lack of a better term) were generally unable to transcend the created reality of the 'Orient.' As an analysis, Said's treatise is somewhat one-dimensional leaving one the impression that those social scientists whom he would define as Orientalists functioned in a void with regard to ideas and notions not directly related to their discipline. That he should not recognize the manner in which tenets espoused in alternative discourses might become incorporated within Orientalist discourse is the result of his failure to adequately contextualize discourses within the societies that produce them. Little reference is made to the particulars of the cultural and social milieu within which individual Orientalists lived. Almost entirely omitted are issues and ideas topical to the Orientalist in question. Although often unrelated in any direct sense to the 'Orient,' these had a profound effect on how the 'East' was perceived and thus on Orientalist discourse itself. This was particularly the case when a specific subject-matter in the 'Orient' touched upon issues contemporaneously prevalent within the home society.⁶⁷

In this article, I have examined one such subject-matter, namely that of Muslim women. In as much as gender was inherent to the topic in

⁶⁷ Robert J Allison's *The Crescent Obscured* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) provides an excellent example of this. A great deal was written in the United States during the late 18th and early 19th centuries regarding the Oriental institution of slavery, particularly with reference to American merchant marines who had been taken prisoner in North Africa during the Barbary wars. At face value, much of what was written appears quite congruous with Orientalist discourse. Allison, however, argues that the emphasis placed on 'Oriental' slavery had more to do with the then raging debate in the States concerning *American* slavery. The significance of related writings are, therefore, best understood within the context of the latter discourse, constituting as it did a much frequented topic of discussion at the time.

question, it is not surprising that tenets related to the prevalent gender discourse of the day, what I have termed the discourse of domesticity, should come into play. In the end, these tenets reconfigured some of the most basic tenets of Orientalism within a perspective which saw the despotism of 'Oriental' men as but one manifestation of the overall bestiality of the male gender, and the subjugation of Muslim women as a case of common cause experienced by all women. Further, through the incorporation of tenets which defined all women as fundamentally the same, missionaries were able to speak of 'Orientals' in a manner which did not set them apart from Westerners outside the one crucial exception of faith. When viewed in this manner, one finds that Orientalist discourse was considerably more pliant, the dividing line between 'East' and 'West' much less rigid, than Said would have us believe. Perceived differences between the Occident and the Orient were considerably more tractable, which, in this case, is not so surprising. Missionaries, after all, sought change, and in their desire to rehabilitate Muslim societies, was a recognition that 'Orientals' were not so different after all.

Brewster, New York

ERIK FREAS



ON THE ORIGINS OF SHĪʿĪ ḤADĪTH

The origins of a specifically Shīʿī collection of Ḥadīth and the attendant emergence of a body of religio-legal norms is an area which has received little attention within the critical tradition of Western scholarship. This is despite the fact that the elaboration of Shīʿī religio-legal norms was clearly of major significance in the evolution of a truly sectarian Shīʿism.

In the following it will be argued that the first major impulse towards identifying a coherent and comprehensive set of Shīʿī religio-legal norms distinct from those of the majority of Muslims occurred during the time of the first Abbāsids. This development came as a corollary to that dynasty's accession, in the resort of the Khurasanian revolutionary movement to Shīʿī symbolism which gave promise of a Ṭālibī caliphate, and the ensuing disillusionment when the new regime failed to fulfil its potential. This failure to realize the expectations of the Ṭālibī sympathizers did not immediately result in insurrection, but rather first and foremost in strenuous efforts to define a Shīʿī identity *vis-à-vis* the Abbāsids in particular and the majority of Muslims in general. The framework within which this activity was to take place ensued from the growth of legal enquiry at the hands of legal specialists, the results of which were enshrined in Ḥadīth.

The Development of Ḥadīth

Until the latter part of the Umayyad caliphate, Islamic law, in the sense of being rooted in and drawing its inspiration from a religious ideal, can hardly be said to have existed.¹ From the time of the Prophet legal questions had been addressed on an ad hoc basis and to meet any new circumstances with which the Muslim community found itself confronted. In addition to the solutions thus arrived at, Qurʾānic injunction was often, but not always, resorted to, and this was supplemented by local custom and the legal and administrative practices of the conquered territories. However, during the final few decades of the Umayyad caliphate, pious scholars (the *ʿulamāʾ* or *fuqahāʾ*) began to associate together and to discuss the correct way to behave in Islamic terms. Their main objectives were to systematize the law, to Islamicize it and to make it incumbent on

¹ This brief resume of the development of Sunni law is based on J. Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); and N. J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1964).

the whole Muslim community. The corpus of doctrine was developed by using the foundations outlined above, and was further augmented by the application of the personal opinion (*ra'y*) of individual scholars on the basic material. It was these early religious scholars who were later to form the so-called "schools of law."

In time, the concept underlying the theory of law was rationalized and came to be expressed as the living tradition or *Sunna* of the school. This indicated the consensus of opinion (*ijmā'*) of those acknowledged to be the school's leading representatives. The body of doctrine propounded by the school was initially anonymous, importance being attached only to the general consensus of opinion and not to the ideas of any individual scholar. Eventually this living tradition was viewed in terms of the doctrine of the leading scholars, such as Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767 CE), Mālik b. Anas (d. 795 CE) and al-Awzā'ī (d. 774 CE).

From about 720 CE, there occurred a trend to imbue the body of legal formulae of the *'ulamā'* with even more authority by retrospectively attributing it to notable scholars in the past. In this way the theory of Islamic law was given a more coherent conceptual basis, the notion of the living tradition thus being seen as a continuity between past and present. The Kufans adopted Ibrāhīm al-Nakhā'ī as the authority for much of their doctrine, while the Medinans ascribed their teachings to such as 'Abd Allah b. 'Utba, Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib and 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr, all of whom died at the beginning of the eighth century CE.

These persons were considered to have had their legal opinions transmitted in the form of traditions related on their authority. Closely attendant upon this development, there were moves to attribute the doctrine and the traditions in which it was enshrined to important scholars even further back in time. The Kufans, for example, chose Ibn Mas'ūd, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, all prominent Companions of the Prophet, the Meccans chose Ibn 'Abbās, another Companion, and the Medinans chose 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and his son 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar.

Just before the Abbāsids acceded to power, there arose strong support for the pre-eminent authority of traditions. Those who upheld this view considered that the use of *ra'y* was unacceptable as a source of law and that only Ḥadīth statements on the authority of the Prophet should be used. This argument eventually proved to be the most compelling, and tens of thousands of Ḥadīth from Muḥammad came to light to provide one of the basic sources of legal formulation.

In practice then, the law was elaborated on the bases already alluded to and the independent reasoning of the legal scholars. This doctrine subsequently came to be expressed in the form of traditions. As Islamic law was based largely and formally upon authoritative traditions, a concomi-

tant of this was the proliferation of normative Ḥadīth. Ḥadīth statements were both the supposedly external source text of legal doctrine and at the same time the means by which that doctrine was articulated. The increasing emphasis placed on the chain of relators, or *isnād*, also aided this process, in that as long as these persons were considered to be trustworthy it was in practice difficult to challenge and formally refute the content or *matn* of the tradition.² Traditions quoted on a suitable authority not only formed the basis of legal formulation but also became the prime means of expression for all opinions seeking validation.

In a very real sense, the emergence of the Ḥadīth form and its subsequent pre-eminence provided for the first time in Islam a viable means of expression for groups of all persuasions. Just as the schools of law used Ḥadīth statements to enshrine their tenets, so many interest groups resorted to the same medium. The words and actions of unimpeachable authorities, and for the majority increasingly the Prophet, were invoked to justify and legitimate. Not least of the groups and individuals who were to utilize this newfound medium were those associated with Shīʿism.

Regarding the collection of Ḥadīth in general, there are indications that prior to the efflorescence of interest in Ḥadīth and the Islamicization of the law at least some traditions were being written down quite early, perhaps even during the time of the Prophet. Reference is made to some of the Companions having made *ṣaḥīḥas* in which they collected traditions. Among such compilers mention might be made of Samura b. Jundab (d. 679 CE), Jābir b. ʿAlī b. ʿAmr al-Khazrajī (d. 697 CE) and al-Ashajj (born during the caliphate of Abū Bakr).³ Later in Medina, ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 712 or 717 CE) is also said to have taken notes on Ḥadīth which were to form the basis of subsequent collections. Muḥammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhri (d. 741 CE) is purported to have done likewise.

Prior to the early Abbāsīd caliphate and the generations of Mālik b. Anas and Abū Ḥanīfa, however, there is little evidence that Shīʿism found expression in an independent corpus of religio-legal norms. This was necessarily the case. During most of the pre-Abbāsīd era, Shīʿism was charac-

² Initially, attention was only paid to the content (*matn*) of the traditions, but the facility with which they were quoted in support of any idea eventually led the schools of *Ḥadīth* to investigate the chain of relators in the *isnād*. Although the *isnād* was an essential part of the later collections of Ḥadīth and became the sole focus of critical attention as to the authenticity of a tradition, the first systematic examination of these did not occur until al-Shaʿbī (d. 721-8 CE), while the first critics proper are stated to have been Shuʿba b. al-Hajjāj (d. 777 CE) and Mālik b. Anas (d. 795 CE). In fact, it was only at the beginning of the eighth century CE that the addition of a complete *isnād* was considered at all necessary. But even later than that, Ibn Ishāq (d. 768 CE) quotes traditions in his biography of the Prophet, and although these have *isnāds* attached, they are not always complete. Similarly, the traditions quoted in Mālik's *Aluwattaʿ* sometimes have an incomplete *isnād* or it is absent altogether.

³ See F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967) 1:84-85.

teristically a disparate phenomenon, sometimes not surfacing for long periods of time, and manifested in the predominantly political activities of a number of diffuse and heterogeneous groups. There is little evidence of a continuity of identity regarding those involved in its various expressions and often the only common predisposition was opposition to the ruling authorities. This lack of homogeneity meant in turn that there could be little continuity of doctrine. Certainly, some of the early Shī'ī groups formulated ideologies, indulged in speculation concerning the Ṭālibīs they ostensibly championed and perhaps even elaborated ethical codes to which their associates were to adhere. But the conclusions reached were generally vague and limited and were as unacceptable to potential supporters as they were to the Muslim majority. They were the preserve of the few and as a consequence were largely lost or replaced when the movement in question lost momentum. Although those associated with Shī'ism were differentiated by their statements regarding the identity and characteristics of the rightful caliph, this did not necessarily entail that they rejected the value systems of the community at large. The groups and individuals concerned were separated from their co-religionists often by no more than an enhanced reverence for the Ṭālibī family and a predisposition to utilize the symbolic status and charismata which the family possessed to validate and hence further their ambitions.

There are indeed many examples of Ḥadīth propagated by Shī'a during the Umayyad caliphate, but in so far as these traditions could be differentiated from others, this was largely due to their concern with the merits of the Ṭālibīs and the family's political prerogative to the caliphate. These relate especially to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib regarding whom a special literary genre arose whose sole function was to outline his virtues (*faḍā'il*). Typical of the early Shī'ī traditions, it is stated that 'Alī was the first to accept Islam after the Prophet, that he often saved the Prophet's life and that he went with Muḥammad on the latter's night journey to the seven heavens (the *mi'rāj*). There are also numerous Ḥadīth showing that the Prophet designated 'Alī as his successor. Many of these found their way into the Sunnī collections, probably because of the widespread reverence of the Ṭālibīs and also because the later Sunnī compilers could not easily remove the pro-Ṭālibī traditions which were well-known and endorsed by the wider Muslim community. There were, however, attempts to contest traditions showing that the Prophet had designated 'Alī with others indicating the opposite.

The Abbāsids and Early Shī'ism

The available evidence points to the early Abbāsīd period as the time when a specifically Shī'ī corpus of doctrinal and legal norms first began to

emerge. The discussion can now move on to examine the reasons for this and the form it took.

From the beginning, the new Abbāsīd rulers had to strive to consolidate and extend their authority. This involved political moves to gain overall control of the Khurasanian army, the main support of the regime, and the cultivation of several interest groups such as the Abbāsīd family itself, the *Kuttāb* and later the *Mawālī* upon which to base their power and to act as government administrators. Together with political consolidation, however, the regime also depended upon the creation and transmission of the criteria upon which the legitimation of its authority was based.

The Abbāsīds had not gained the caliphate due to any organized political program of reform but by articulating social and economic grievances on the ideological level. The precise range and content of the ideological formulations which served as a basis for the Khurasanian movement cannot be known with any degree of accuracy, but it was essentially a revolutionary ideology in which resort was made to a number of concepts and symbols which were primarily associated with Shīʿī polemics.

During the revolution, those responsible for promoting and propagating the rationale behind the Khurasanian movement, such as Abū Muslim, emphasized revenge for the death of al-Ḥusayn and other Ṭālibī martyrs such as Zayd b. ʿAlī. Moreover, they called for the instatement of the Chosen One from the Prophet's family (*al-Riḍā min Āl Muḥammad*),⁴ Abū Muslim claiming to be a representative of the anonymous Imām (*al-Riḍā*). An analogous situation had been seen before with early Shīʿī activists such as Bayān b. Samʿān and Mughīra b. Saʿīd, both of whom claimed to be representatives of the Imām and who, like the Khurasanian *daʿwa*, were active during the latter years of the Umayyad regime. Previously, not all Shīʿī insurrections had clearly formulated ideas as to the identity of the Ṭālibī who was to be given authority. Ḥujr b. ʿAdī and the later Tawwābūn had declined to nominate a specific individual and had contented themselves with an appeal for the anonymous al-Riḍā, as had, according to one account, the Ṭālibī ʿAbd Allah b. Muʿāwiya.⁵ Thus the absence of an identified Imām presented no impediment to the instigators of the Khurasanian movement, and was even an advantage in that support could be elicited from those who might have objected to a particular candidate.

⁴ See al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul waʾl-Mulūk* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1881) 2/3.1989, 1993 (calling for *al-taʿā liʾl-riḍā min ahl bayt rasūl Allah*), 2003. Obedience to the *Riḍā min Āl Muḥammad* is also mentioned in the oath of allegiance to the revolutionary movement, alongside reference to the Book of God and the Sunna of His Prophet. See anon., *Akhbār al-Dawla al-Abbāsīyya* (Beirut. Dār al-Ṭalʿa liʾl-Ṭibāʿa waʾl-Nashr, 1971), 323, 329, 335, 340, 365

⁵ Al-Iṣfahānī, *Maḡātil al-Ṭālibīyin* (Tehran. Muʾassasat Matbūʿātī Ismāʿīliyyīn, 1970), 165

Al-Riḍā min Āl Muḥammad referred to the chosen one from the Prophet Muḥammad's family but without any certain referent. Despite the ambiguity, however, it is of particular significance that before the revolution it was used predominantly with regard to the Ṭālibī family. Testifying to the close identification of the Ṭālibīs with al-Riḍā, the term was also used in Ṭālibī insurrections after the accession of the Abbāsids. The revolt of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī Ṣāḥib Fakhiḥ in Medina in 786 CE made use of it in its propaganda,⁶ as did the revolt of Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn Ṭabāṭbaʿī in Kūfa and Baṣra in 814-815 CE.⁷ Moreover, the title was used by al-Ma'mūn's appointed Ṭālibī successor ʿAlī Al-Riḍā. For the majority of people, both prior to and after the Abbāsid takeover, it was still broadly to be associated with the Ṭālibī family. This association meant that the Abbāsids never referred to al-Riḍā in their early legitimization arguments.

In such a way, the Khurasanian revolutionary movement was hardly to be distinguished from other Shīʿī movements which had preceded it, and it was inevitable that some would expect the recipients of the revolution to be the Ṭālibīs. It was therefore imperative that the new regime should attempt to diffuse any claim by the Ṭālibīs or on their behalf. Thus, immediately after the accession of the new regime it became involved in an ideological contest with those who identified the claims of the Khurasanian propaganda as relating specifically to a descendant of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.

One initial resort of Abbāsid apologetics was to argue that the Ṭālibī family had earlier relinquished their prerogative to the caliphate. It was alleged, with whatever degree of truth, that Abū Hāshim, the son of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya and a focus of attention for a number of the so-called Shīʿī Kaysāniyya, had upon his death bequeathed the Ṭālibī family's right to the Imāmate to an Abbāsid and that this right had been inherited by subsequent Abbāsids until the present time. This argument was soon abandoned, however, when it was presumably seen to give at least a tacit acknowledgment that the Ṭālibīs had possessed a prior claim.

But the terms on which the Abbāsids had risen to power could not be easily renounced once that power was achieved and the new regime had to present itself as the realization of the revolutionary postulates. *Al-Riḍā min Āl Muḥammad* was expected and the Abbāsids attempted to strengthen their identification as the true family of Muḥammad and on that basis maintain that they had a genealogical right to rule. The early Abbāsid stress on their being the family of Muḥammad and hence his true heirs is

⁶ See, for example, *Maqātil*, 450.

⁷ See, for example, *Maqātil*, 532.

seen in the inauguration speech of Abū'l-Abbās al-Saffāḥ in Kūfa dealing with the Abbāsids' legitimacy to rule:

Praise be to God who distinguished us as relatives of the Prophet of God and his close kin, who raised us up from among his ancestors, grew us from his tree, originated us from his source and endeared him to our hearts. . . .⁸

During the same inauguration ceremony, Dāwūd b. 'Alī, al-Saffāḥ's uncle, also gave a speech to the Kufans in which he thanked God who

gave us our inheritance from our Prophet Muḥammad. . . the right has returned to its proper place among the family of your Prophet's house.⁹

Some twelve years later, during his revolt in Medina, Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya allegedly wrote a letter to the caliph al-Manṣūr. In this, he refers initially to the Abbāsīd usurpation of Shīʿī support for the Ṭālibī family and then goes on to challenge the Abbāsīd claim that they had a hereditary right to rule. Muḥammad writes:

You pretended that this affair was ours, rose up for it with our partisans and acquired our merit even though our forefather 'Alī was the trustee and the Imām. So how could you inherit his authority while his descendants are still alive? You were aware that no one who had sought this affair had our lineage, honor, status and the nobility of our forefathers. . . None of the Banū Hāshim possess the same close kinship [with the Prophet], precedence [in Islam] and merit as we do.¹⁰

Concerning Muḥammad's argument that the Ṭālibī prerogative was inherited from the Prophet, al-Manṣūr states that this relies on the premise that Fāṭima, a daughter of the Prophet and wife of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, passed on the status of the Prophet to his grandchildren, but this is fallacious:

As for your claim that you are the sons of the Prophet (*Banū al-rasūl*), God says in His Book that Muḥammad was not the father of any of your men. Rather, you are the sons of his daughter. Although she had a close relationship, she could not be made an heir, could not inherit rule nor the Imāmate.¹¹

⁸ *Ta'rikh*, 3/1:31.

⁹ *Ta'rikh*, 3/1:31.

¹⁰ *Ta'rikh*, 3/1:209-10.

¹¹ *Ta'rikh*, 3/1:213. For the complete letters see *Ta'rikh*, 3/1:211-15, and Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Istiḳāma, 1940), 5:360-64.

According to al-Manṣūr, the Ṭālibīs had no particular right to the caliphate as uncles have precedence over female relatives. The Prophet's paternal uncle and al-Manṣūr's great grandfather, al-ʿAbbās, inherited the Prophet's status and from him it was transmitted to his descendants the Abbāsids. As Ibn Khaldūn remarks: "Their [the Abbāsids] right to power is often supported by the argument that their right goes back to al-ʿAbbās. He was alive at the time of Muḥammad's death, and he had the best title to become Muḥammad's heir because of the group feeling attached to paternal uncles."¹²

Abbāsīd arguments were further buttressed with traditions which showed that ʿAlī in particular had in fact no prerogative to the caliphate, a basic premise used by the early Shīʿa. History was rewritten to corroborate these views, as well as a record of Abbāsīd suffering and opposition to the Umayyads; again another attempt to arrogate Ṭālibī qualifications.

In other respects too, Abbāsīd apologetics were often shaped in contradistinction to those associated with Shīʿism. For example, during the time of al-Manṣūr it was circulated that he had inherited an *ʿilm* from his ancestors recorded in writing and preserved in a safe (*ṣafat*) which told of all past and future events.¹³ Mention is also made of a yellow scroll (*al-ṣaḥīfa al-ṣafrāʾ*) which had originally belonged to ʿAlī. This was said to have been subsequently inherited by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya who then passed it on to his son ʿAbd Allah b. Muḥammad (Abū Hāshim). ʿAbd Allah then bequeathed it to the Abbāsids. The scroll was said to predict the Khurasanian revolt and all the attendant details.¹⁴ These echo Shīʿī attestations of the physical manifestations of the Imāmate attributed to

¹² Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, trans. F. Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 1:410. In further support of the precedence of al-ʿAbbās many traditions were fabricated to show the special regard in which he was held by the Prophet. One such tradition has the Prophet saying to him "you are my uncle, the twin brother of my father, and the best of those of my family who will leave offspring after me" (*anta ʿammī wa sinw Abī wa khayr man akhlafa baʿdi min ahli*) (al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Tāʾrikh Baghdād* [Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1931], 5:63). For other examples of traditions forged for the Abbāsids see al-Suyūṭī, *History of the Caliphs*, trans. H. S. Jarret (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1881), 13-17 and 265-67 prophesying al-Saffāh and al-Manṣūr; *Tāʾrikh Baghdād*, 5:391, on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās which predicts the coming of al-Saffāh, al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī. See also *Tāʾrikh Baghdād*, 1:62-64, 14:435; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tahdhīb Tāʾrikh Dimashq al-Kabīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Maṣīra, 1979), 7:245-47 in which the Prophet reprimands ʿAlī for quarreling with al-ʿAbbās, and says that the descendants of al-ʿAbbās will inherit the caliphate. Even ʿAlī was used to verify this. In one tradition it is stated that al-ʿAbbās requested ʿAlī to ask the Prophet who shall inherit his authority after him, ʿAlī replying that the authority rests in al-ʿAbbās (*History of the Caliphs*, 16-17). Elsewhere ʿAlī calls al-ʿAbbās's son ʿAbd Allah the "father of the kings" (*al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*, 5:382) and predicts the coming of the Abbāsids and the establishment of Baghdād (Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib ʿAlī Abī Ṭālib* [Najaf: Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydariyya, 1956], 108).

¹³ See I. M. Sakhnīnī, "The Abbāsīd Regime under al-Saffāh and al-Manṣūr", PhD thesis (University of Exeter, 1991), 70.

¹⁴ *Akhbār*, 184-85.

the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. For example, he is also said to have had possession of ʿAlī's book¹⁵ and various other works of divination including one or two *Jafrs*,¹⁶ Fāṭima's scroll,¹⁷ and the scroll of Abraham and Moses.¹⁸ Finally, al-Manṣūr's officially choosing "al-Mahdī" as the title of his son and heir was a clear attempt to take over Shīʿī symbolism, al-Mahdī being a term used by the earlier Shīʿa to refer to the expected restorer of Islamic justice and applied to the Ṭālibī Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya during the caliphate of al-Manṣūr.

The task of establishing the Abbāsīd entitlement to rule was rendered considerably more difficult due to the Abbāsīds not being closely associated with the revolutionary movement in Khurasan by the majority of people. Indeed, there are a number of observations which imply that in reality the Abbāsīds had little to do with the affair. Abū Muslim had already begun his activities when the Ṭālibī ʿAbd Allah b. Muʿāwiya staged his insurrection beginning in 744/5 CE. In the course of Ibn Muʿāwiya's revolt he was allegedly joined by a number of leading Abbāsīds including ʿĪsā b. Mūsā, ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlī, Abūʿl-ʿAbbās and Abū Jaʿfar.¹⁹ It is even stated that Ibn Muʿāwiya appointed Abū Jaʿfar as one of his district governors.²⁰ If the Abbāsīds saw themselves and were acknowledged by the Khurasanian *darvā* as leaders of the movement, it is curious that they should at the same time become intimately involved in a Ṭālibī insurrection. Furthermore, Abūʿl-ʿAbbās, Abū Jaʿfar and Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad are said to have been present at the meeting of the Banū Hāshim in which it was decided to promote the Ṭālibī Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allah al-Nafs al-Zakiyya as caliph. Two meetings are reported to have taken place, the first at al-Abwaʿ near Mecca after the death of Walīd II in 743 CE and the second during Marwān II's reign (744-750 CE). It was around this time that the purported first Abbāsīd Imām of the Khurasanian *daʿwa*, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, died (in 743 CE) and was succeeded by his son Ibrāhīm who took over the Hāshimiyya. If the reports concerning the meetings of the Banū Hāshim are correct, then once again, Abbāsīd support of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allah would require some explanation in the light of other accounts which state that they were the center of attention in Khurasan. Furthermore, although Ibrāhīm is said to have inherited the position of Imām from his father, it was only when the Khurasaniyya ar-

¹⁵ al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār* (Beirut. Muʿassasat al-Wafāʿ, 1983) 47: 271, 272.

¹⁶ *Biḥār*, 47:270-71; al-Kulaynī, *Al-Shāfiʿ fi Sharḥ Usūl al-Kāfi* (Najaf: Maṭbaʿat al-Ghāri al-Ḥadītha, n.d.), 3:200, 201, 201-2.

¹⁷ *Biḥār*, 47:270-1, 272-73; *Sharḥ Usūl al-Kāfi*, 3: 197-98, 203-4.

¹⁸ *Biḥār*, 47:270.

¹⁹ *Tāʾrikh*, 2/3:1977, *Maqātil*, 147.

²⁰ Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarāʾ waʾl-Kuttab* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1980), 98.

rived in Kūfa, some six years after he became Imām and more than two years after the announcement of the revolution, that he was apprehended by the Umayyads and killed. Prior to this, he had continued to live unmolested in the Abbāsids' home in Humayma, southern Syria, even though during this time the Khurasanian army had gained control over most of Khurasan, had crossed the Euphrates and was on its way to Kūfa. It may be said that the Abbāsids managed to avoid Umayyad reprisals during the lengthy period of propaganda and preparations not so much because their name was kept secret, but rather by their not being in any way associated with the activities by the majority of those engaged in them.

Indeed, whatever connection the Abbāsids had with Khurasan before the revolution it was not as intimate as that of the Ṭālibī family, and thus it is even more likely that the propaganda of the *da'wa* should be interpreted as applying to the Ṭālibīs. In the revolt of Zayd b. 'Alī people from Rayy, Jurjan and Khurasan are said to have sworn allegiance to him.²¹ After Zayd's death his movement was continued in Khurasan by his son Yaḥyā.²² 'Abd Allah b. Mu'āwiya had taken over large areas of Persia during his revolt, appointing governors to Istakhr, Shiraz, Kirman and Qumm.²³ Moreover, shortly after the Abbāsid accession there is evidence of a body of Khurasanian support for the Ṭālibīs. Both 'Abd Allah b. al-Ḥasan and his son Muḥammad are said to have had partisans in Khurasan,²⁴ Muḥammad alleging that the people of Khurasan had given him their oath of allegiance.²⁵ In order to defuse this support for Muḥammad, al-Manṣūr cut the head off a certain Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allah al-'Uthmānī and sent it with a delegation to Khurasan claiming that it was the head of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya.²⁶ Elsewhere, when 'Abd al-Jabbār b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, a former leader of the Khurasanian *da'wa*, was appointed by al-Manṣūr as governor of Khurasan in 757 CE, he is reported to have seized some of the leaders (*quwwād*) there who were accused of agitating in the name of the descendants of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.²⁷

Whatever the case, it would appear that whether the Abbāsids were initially involved or not and were initially acknowledged as leaders, this was largely irrelevant as the movement gathered momentum in Khurasan.

²¹ *Maqātil*, 135.

²² On Yaḥyā b. Zayd see C. Van Arendonk, "Yaḥyā b. Zaid" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, first edition, ed., M. Th. Houtsma et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1934). The author states that "the death of Yaḥyā and the shameful treatment of his body deeply affected the Shī'a of Khurasan. Vengeance for Yaḥyā became the watchword of the followers of Abū Muslim, who executed those concerned with his death." (4:1151).

²³ *Maqātil*, 167.

²⁴ *Maqātil*, 211-12.

²⁵ *Maqātil*, 268.

²⁶ *Maqātil*, 226.

²⁷ *Tārīkh*, 3/1128.

The situation in Kūfa at the arrival of the revolutionary forces was almost as if the Abbāsids had had nothing to do with the endeavor at all. When the Khurasaniyya arrived in Kūfa and the Umayyad regime was ousted some of the Abbāsīd family, including Abū'l-Abbās, the brother and supposedly appointed heir of Ibrāhīm, left their home in Humayma and made their way to Kūfa. But Abū Salama, the provisional head of state and *Wazīr ʿAlī Muḥammad*, kept them more or less under house arrest. Many weeks passed before the identity of the new caliph was decided, and meanwhile Abū Salama is reported to have communicated with a number of Ṭālibīs offering them the caliphate. This episode, if true, would only further illustrate the Shīʿī nature of the revolutionary propaganda and the consequent expectation of a Ṭālibī caliphate. Later, Abū Muslim is alleged to have written to the caliph Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr and said that although he had given the caliphate to Abū'l-Abbās al-Saffāḥ, the Ṭālibīs deserved to get it.²⁸ Abū Salama and subsequently Abū Muslim were both rapidly eliminated.

The formulation of ideology was an important factor in the consolidation of the Abbāsids, but it was never really fundamental to their exercise of power. In the last resort their rule was justified by a de facto possession of it and was initially maintained largely by violence. The sense of disillusionment with the Abbāsids was compounded by the new regime's failure to ameliorate the injustice perceived under the Umayyads. The Abbāsids were seen to be acting contrary to the expectations of those who wished to see a new dispensation and those for whom rule by *ʿAlī-Riḍā min ʿAlī Muḥammad* involved a change in the nature of the caliphate. The regime began by ruthlessly exterminating all the Umayyads on whom it could lay its hands. A number of accounts testify to the often treacherous and brutal methods employed by al-Saffāḥ in achieving this which, even if exaggerated, indicate well enough the way the Abbāsids were thought of. Regarding those who had spearheaded the Khurasanian

²⁸ *Tāʾrikh Baghdād*, 10:208 The text does not mention the Ṭālibīs by name, but it is obvious that they are being referred to. It reads:

I made your brother an Imām and a guide in religion because of his close kinship [with the Prophet] and the testament which he claimed to have received . . . But he ordered me to seize on suspicion, to kill on insinuation and to accept no pardon. So on his orders I tore apart the sacred things which God has decreed should be protected, and shed blood which God has determined should be spared. I took the affair [i.e. the caliphate] from those who deserved it and placed it where it does not belong (*zaʿwaytu al-amr ʿan ahlihi wa waḍaʿtuhi minhu fi ghayr mahallihī*).

Elsewhere, there are reports that Abū Muslim offered the caliphate to the Ṭālibīs. See Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, trans., A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn (London: Kegan Paul International, 1984), 154. See also *Manāqib ʿAlī Abī Ṭālib*, 355 and 356; where he is alleged to have offered it to Jaʿfar al-Sādiq.

da'wa and who were instrumental in bringing the Abbāsids to power, very few of these were subsequently rewarded with positions among the ruling elite, and indeed many of the individuals most closely implicated in the revolutionary efforts were killed by the Abbāsids.²⁹ Foremost among the casualties were Abū Salama, Abū Muslim and Abū'l-Jahm, but those executed also included other former leaders such as 'Abd al-Jabbār b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān³⁰ and Jahwar al-Murrar.³¹

Perhaps even more objectionable because directed at a descendant of the Prophet, when Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya revolted in Medina al-Manṣūr adopted very severe measures against him and his relations from the Ḥasanid branch of the family, many of them being imprisoned and killed.

In addition to this, fundamental and potentially objectionable changes were taking place, both in the constitution of the ruling elite, which was increasingly composed of non-Arab Easterners, and in the bureaucratic arrangements, which were of similar foreign provenance. Thus, the Abbāsids seemed as distant and repressive as the regime they had replaced and their promised era of justice under the rule of an heir of the Prophet rapidly lost credibility. In short, the anticipated al-Riḍā proved to be not so.

Despite the strenuous efforts of the apologists to arrogate Shī'ī principles in the service of the Abbāsids, the postulates on which the new regime had risen to power could still be seen to apply more to the Ṭālibī family; it was not only the Abbāsids who were recipients of the revolutionary endeavor, but also the Ṭālibīs. The attempts to appropriate Shī'ī principles were therefore bound to elicit some sort of reaction on the part of those who identified the rightful caliphate with the Ṭālibī family.

A Shī'ī Intellectual Response

With the defeat of the Tawwābūn and subsequently that of Mukhtār b. Abī 'Ubayd, earlier Shī'ism had witnessed a significant change in orientation which apparently continued undisturbed for a period of some 50 years. Those associated with it had turned their efforts away from direct political opposition and devoted themselves instead to the development of doctrinal positions regarding certain members of the Ṭālibī family, notably Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya and his son Abū Hāshim. This was a quietistic solution to their disaffection from the Umayyads and answered to the consistent lack of success in Shī'ī inspired revolts and the apparent futility of challenging a powerful ruling authority.

²⁹ See "The 'Abbāsid Regime under al-Saffāḥ and al-Manṣūr," 69 on those killed, and pp. 95-96 on their not acquiring positions within the government.

³⁰ *Tārīkh*, 3/1:135.

³¹ *Tārīkh*, 3/1:122.

The situation immediately following the accession of the Abbāsids was not dissimilar. It is understandable that those who identified a new and just dispensation with a Ṭālibī caliphate should hope that the new regime would be a Ṭālibī one. These included those who had previously pinned their hopes on a Ṭālibī caliphate, and perhaps others who had associated the revolutionary propaganda with Shīʿism and who, disillusioned with the Abbāsids, now looked towards the Ṭālibīs as a panacea for their complaints.

Moreover, for those of a previous Shīʿī persuasion, the Khurasanian revolution had seemed the most likely to offer a positive result after the many abortive attempts: the defeat of ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and the crushing of ostensible supporters of the Ṭālibī cause such as Ḥujr b. ʿAdī, Mukhtār and the Tawwābūn. That the Khurasanian revolt succeeded only to have the Abbāsids vociferously renouncing its promises and taking steps to distance themselves from their Shīʿī associations must have been even more demoralizing. The politically active policies of pro-Ṭālibī sympathizers which had seemingly reached their apogee with the Khurasanian revolt appeared ultimately thwarted.

In the central Islamic lands, a political response on the part of those loyal to the Ṭālibīs was no doubt deemed untenable in the face of an increasing absolutist Abbāsīd regime backed up by the full might of the Khurasanian army and obviously prepared to brook no challenges to its newfound power. Moreover, it was not likely that a population torn by the strife and turmoil of civil war would want to commit itself to further fighting, desiring instead a period of stability and peace. It took twelve years before another Shīʿī rebellion was seen in Iraq, with the abortive efforts of Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd Allah in Baṣra in 762 CE.

Political action was not a viable option, but the accession of the Abbāsids and their challenging and usurping propaganda elicited an immediate reaction from the Shīʿa on the ideological level. The center of this activity was Kūfa. Kūfa had a long and eventful history of support for the Ṭālibīs and had witnessed far more activity in their name than any other place. Sentiment for the family had been part of Kūfan consciousness since the time of ʿAlī and al-Ḥusayn, an always latent and available resource for the symbolizing of ideals, the articulation of discontent and, more cynically, for the disaffected to manipulate to their advantage. Thus it was inevitably here that Shīʿī attempts at countering Abbāsīd claims and developing a corpus of doctrine took place.

During the Umayyad caliphate it had been sufficient simply to assert that a member of the Ṭālibī family should be caliph. With the advent of the Abbāsids, however, some could argue that Shīʿī aspirations had been fulfilled, that the *Ahl al-Bayt*, *Āl Muḥammad*, were in power. Opposition to the Abbāsids therefore took the form of alleging that the regime which

they inaugurated differed from the postulates on which it was ostensibly founded, this involving the development of a more rigorous definition of the central issue of contention, the nature of the Imāmate. These efforts had as their basis a desire to imbue the Imāmate with a spiritual authority and thus to compensate for its obvious lack of political power. Discussions on the Imāmate became quite prevalent at the time and resulted in the appearance of a number of treatises, among which were the *Kitāb al-Imāma* by Hishām b. al-Ḥakam,³² the *Kitāb al-Imāma* by Muḥammad b. al-Khalīl, a follower and pupil of Hishām,³³ and the *Kitāb al-Waṣiyya wa'l-Imāma* by 'Alī b. Ri'āb Abū'l-Ḥasan.³⁴

Discussions regarding the Imāmate occurred within an overall context of fervent debate within Shī'ī circles and all the major issues of faith were addressed, these concerning the nature of God and divinity, prophecy, revelation and the believer. Some of the more notable personalities involved were Hishām b. al-Ḥakam, Mu'min al-Ṭāq, Muḥammad b. Nu'mān al-Aḥwāl (Shayṭān al-Ṭāq), Zurāra b. A'yan and 'Alī b. Ismā'il al-Maythamī, the latter being described as the first *mutakallim* in the Imāmiyya.³⁵ All these were contemporaries of and associated with the Shī'ī Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (699-765 CE). Al-Kashshī's *Ma'rifat al-Rijāl* contains a number of reports of the discussions and disputes which occurred. One such debate took place between Hishām b. al-Ḥakam, Hishām b. Sālim and some twenty other individuals and concerned the unity and description of God.³⁶ Opposing parties were often maligned and treatises were composed refuting the ideas of adversaries. Among these were Ibn al-Hakam's *Al-Radd 'alā Hishām [b. Sālim] al-Jawāliqī*,³⁷ his *Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-Nas fī'l-Imāma*³⁸ and his *Al-Radd 'alā Shayṭān al-Ṭāq*.³⁹

In addition to doctrinal development, however, and just as momentous in its implications for the formation of a truly sectarian Shī'ism, there were strenuous moves to identify a body of religio-legal norms as originating from the Ṭālibī family. This tendency was not fundamentally dissimilar in its rationale from the efforts to define the nature of the Imām, both fields of endeavor being concerned to imbue the Imāmate with a spiritual authority, a spiritual authority which the Abbāsid caliphate was rapidly forfeiting.

Alongside references to *Al-Riḍā min Āl Muḥammad*, another prominent aspect of the Khurasanian revolutionary ideology had been a call for

³² al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist* (Najaf: Maktabat al-Murtaḍawiyya wa Maṭba'atuha, n.d.), 175.

³³ *Fihrist*, 132; al-Najāshī, *Rijāl* (Tehran: Muṣṭafavī Markaz Nashr Kitāb, n.d.), 231.

³⁴ *Rijāl*, 175.

³⁵ *Fihrist*, 87.

³⁶ al-Kashshī, *Ma'rifat al-Rijāl* (Mashhad: Danishgah-i Mashhad, 1970), 279-80.

³⁷ *Rijāl*, 304.

³⁸ *Rijāl*, 305; *Fihrist*, 175.

³⁹ *Fihrist*, 175.

rule according to the Sunna of the Prophet. During the propaganda campaign the oath of allegiance to the revolutionary movement was "to adhere to the Book of God and the Sunna of the Prophet,"⁴⁰ and Abū Muslim is reported to have told the Khurasanis "The Imām has ordered us . . . to summon the people to the Book of God and the Sunna of His Prophet."⁴¹ This was reconfirmed when the Abbāsids gained the caliphate. In the speech given by Dāwūd b. ʿAlī at al-Saffāh's inauguration ceremony in Kūfa the Abbāsids promised to rule according to the Book of God and the *sīra* of Muḥammad, *sīra* here being synonymous with Sunna and not yet acquiring the meaning of the biography of the Prophet:

We will rule over you according to what God has revealed, deal with you according to the Book of God and treat you, whether commoners or men of distinction, according to the conduct of the Prophet (*nahkum fikum bima anzala Allah wa naʿmal fikum bi kitāb Allah wa nasīr fī ʿamma minikum wa ʾl-khāssa bi sīrat rasūl Allah*).⁴²

Of course, it was not unusual that the Khurasanian *daʿwa* and the Abbāsids should make appeal to the Sunna of the Prophet. Every major revolt from the time of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān to the end of the Umayyad period had done the same.⁴³ Given the diversity of groups utilizing the slogan, Sunna could have meant no more than the "acceptable practice" that the groups involved were advocating. This was similarly the case regarding the Sunna referred to by the Khurasanian revolutionaries and the early Abbāsids.

But by the time of the Abbāsīd accession the Sunna had already begun to acquire a substantive import in the form of traditions on the authority of the Prophet. Shortly after the Abbāsids came to power the first structured collections of Ḥadīth were composed. Among the works subsequently acknowledged by the Sunnīs were those by ʿAbd al-Mālik b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (Ibn Jurayj, d. 767 CE) in Mecca, Ibn Ishāq (d. 767 CE) and Mālik b. Anas (d. 795 CE) in Medina, Maʿmar b. Rāshid (d. 770 CE) in Yemen, Saʿīd b. Abī ʿArūba (d. 773 CE) and Rabīʿ b. Ṣabīḥ (d. 777 CE) in Baṣra, and Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā b. Abī Zāʿida (d. 798 CE) in Kūfa. Moreover, this law was being defined and elaborated by private scholars who were independent of the state, and not by the caliph. The failure of the Abbāsids to take control of the law meant that their claims to be God's representatives on earth, indispensable for salvation and guides of the community, were un-

⁴⁰ *Akhbār*, 284, 287, 317, 323, 329, 335, 340, 365; *Tārīkh*, 2/3:1989, 2003 (*ubayrūkum ʿalā kitāb Allah . . . wa Sunnat nabiyihī*).

⁴¹ *Akhbār*, 292.

⁴² *Tārīkh*, 3/1:31. For the use of *sīra* in this context see P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 83, note 163.

⁴³ See *God's Caliph*, 59-61 on the groups that utilized the call, with references.

dermined.⁴⁴ Indeed, in many respects the hands of the caliphs were increasingly to be tied by the laws being promulgated, as these laws were not defined consonant with political expediency. Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 756 CE) realized the difficulties which this could cause for the caliphate when he wrote his *Risāla fi'l-Ṣaḥāba* for al-Manṣūr. In this treatise Ibn al-Muqaffa' advises the caliph to assert control over the law by reviewing inconsistencies within it and by drawing up a code of the norms which the caliph endorsed. The advice was not heeded. In this way, from its inception the Abbāsīd regime began to lose much of the spiritual authority formerly invested in the caliphate, this being devolved onto the architects of the emerging Sunna, the *ʿulamā'* and the true "heirs of the Prophet."

Although the Abbāsīds never claimed ultimate control of the law, the Shīʿa could view this as one of the prerogatives of the Imāmate within their conception of it. The Abbāsīds could only receive the law and either execute it or not; the Ṭalibī Imams could in theory actually elaborate it and thus assume the position of spiritual guides of the community which the Abbāsīds relinquished. Thus began a process whereby the norms already established and those still being defined were ascribed to authorities acceptable to the Shīʿa, foremost among whom was Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq.

During the period of al-Ṣādiq, Kūfa witnessed a remarkable efflorescence of Shīʿī activity within the area of Ḥadīth collection. Of all the centers of early Sunnī and Shīʿī religio-legal endeavor, it was in Kūfa where interest in jurisprudence and Ḥadīth initially flourished and which witnessed its first major growth. Indeed, there were more compilations of Ḥadīth made here than anywhere else in the Islamic world. The earliest examples of collections of Shīʿī Ḥadīth are those called *uṣūl* (sources) and which are considered to be collections of the traditions of one particular Imām, either heard directly from him or by means of an intermediary. Although the first such compilation is said to have been written by a certain Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī al-ʿĀmirī (d. 694 or 714 CE) this authorship is disputed. The vast majority of the *uṣūl* are claimed by the Shīʿa to have been compiled in the early Abbāsīd period by followers of al-Ṣādiq. Among numerous others mention may be made of the *Kitāb al-Nawādir fi'l-Ḥadīth* by the Kufan Abū Ḥamza Thābit b. Dīnār (d. 767 CE), the *uṣūl* of Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Shurayḥ (d. 776 CE) and of the Kufans Abū'l-Faḍl ʿĀsim b. Ḥumayd, Zayd b. Zarrād, Zayd al-Narsī, ʿAbd al-Mālik b. Ḥākim, Muthannā b. al-Walīd, and Khālīd b. Khalāf, all of whom died around the end of the eighth century CE and who were contemporaries and companions of al-Ṣādiq.⁴⁵ It is commonly maintained by the Shīʿa that there were 400 of these *uṣūl*, each compiled by a different person. However, it has been

⁴⁴ See *God's Caliph*, 80-82 on the way the Abbāsīds styled themselves, with references.

⁴⁵ *Geschichte*, 1:532 ff. .

shown that Shīʿī sources actually identify by name considerably less than this number. The vast majority of those that remain are nevertheless stated to be on the authority of al-Šādiq.⁴⁶

As far as the emergence of a substantiated corpus of strictly legal material is concerned, this relates to the process whereby the original *uṣūl*/were arranged according to subject matter rather than simply being the various pronouncements of a particular Imām. These works are often called *Mubawwab* and/or *Jāmiʿ*. Of particular significance, it is to be noticed that the earliest examples of these works appeared during the period of Jaʿfar al-Šādiq. Thus, there are the collections called *Kitāb Mubawwab fī l-Ḥalāl wa l-Ḥarām* by Ghiyāth b. Ibrāhīm al-Tamīmī, a Baṣran who lived in Kūfa,⁴⁷ by Masʿāda b. Ziyād al-Kūfī,⁴⁸ and by Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Abī Yaḥyā al-Madanī (d. 800 CE),⁴⁹ all of whom are said to have related from al-Šādiq and thus to have been his contemporaries. There is also a *Kitāb fī l-Šarāʾiʿ Mubawwab* by Wuhayb b. Ḥafṣ al-Jurayrī,⁵⁰ a *Kitāb al-Qaḍāyā al-Mubawwab* by Ismāʿīl b. Abī Khālid al-Kūfī,⁵¹ a *Kitāb fī Sāyir al-Abwāb min al-Ḥalāl wa l-Ḥarām* by ʿAbd Allāh b. Sinān,⁵² and *al-Arbaʿ Miʾat Masʿala fī Abwāb al-Ḥalāl wa l-Ḥarām* by the Kūfan Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Rabbāḥ (d. 767 CE),⁵³ all of whom are similarly explicitly stated to have related from al-Šādiq or at least to have been his contemporaries.

Among the *jāmiʿ* works mention might be made of the *Jāmiʿ* by ʿAlī b. Ḥamza al-Baṭāʾinī,⁵⁴ the *Kitāb al-Jāmiʿ* by Mūsā b. al-Qāsim b. Muʿāwiya al-Bajalī,⁵⁵ both of whom are said to have related Ḥadīth from al-Šādiq, and the *Jāmiʿ al-Athār* by Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 823 CE) who related from Mūsā al-Kāẓim but whose career overlapped that of al-Šādiq.⁵⁶

Additional works which judging from their titles were probably concerned with legal matters were also written by contemporaries of al-Šādiq and by those explicitly stated to be relators of his Ḥadīth. These include

⁴⁶ See E. Kohlberg, "al-Uṣūl al-Arbaʿumiʿa," in *Belief and Law in Imami Shīʿism* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1991), 128-66.

⁴⁷ *Rijāl*, 215-6.

⁴⁸ *Rijāl*, 295.

⁴⁹ *Rijāl*, 11; *Fihrist*, 3.

⁵⁰ *Rijāl*, 303-4.

⁵¹ "al-Uṣūl," 132; *Rijāl*, 18-19, *Fihrist*, 10.

⁵² *Rijāl*, 148.

⁵³ *Rijāl*, 226.

⁵⁴ "al-Uṣūl," 133. For a list of these authors and their works see Agha Buzurg al-Tahrani, *Al-Dharīʿa ilā Tasanīf al-Shīʿa* (Tehran: Gagakhana Majlis, 1957), 5:27 ff.

⁵⁵ *Fihrist*, 162. *Rijāl*, 16 remarks that he related Ḥadīth from both al-Baqir and al-Šādiq.

⁵⁶ *Fihrist*, 181. Further such works which appeared slightly later include the *Jāmiʿ al-Kabir fī l-Fiqh* by the Kufan Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Saʿīd (d. 896 CE), (*Rijāl*, 12-13) the *Jāmiʿ fī l-Fiqh* by al-Hasan b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl (d. 883 CE), *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ḥalāl wa l-Ḥarām* by al-ʿAbbās b. Hishām (d. 835 CE) (*Rijāl*, 199-200) and those attributed to the authors of *uṣūl*: *Jāmiʿ fī Abwāb al-Fiqh* by the Kufan ʿAlī b. Asbat b. Sālim (d. c. 864 CE) (*Rijāl*, 177) who is said to have related from ʿAlī al-Riḍā, *Kitāb al-Jāmiʿ* by the Kufan Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Naṣr, who

the *Anwāʿ al-Fiqh* by Thābit b. Shurayḥ,⁵⁷ the *Kitāb fī Anwāʿ min al-Fiqh waʾl-Qaḍāyā waʾl-Sunan* by the Kūfan Saʿīd b. Abīʾl-Jahm al-Qābūsī,⁵⁸ *al-Qaḍāyā* by Muḥammad b. Qays Abū ʿAbd Allah al-Bajalī,⁵⁹ *Kitāb ʾIlal al-Sharāʾiʿ* by Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar,⁶⁰ *Kitāb fīʾl-Ḥalāl waʾl-Ḥarām* by ʿAbd Allah b. Miskān,⁶¹ and *Kitāb al-Sharāʾiʿ* and *Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-Ḥadīth* by the aforementioned Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān.⁶²

Although the canonical collections of Shīʿī Ḥadīth appeared at a relatively late date with al-Kulayni's (d. 939 CE) *Al-Kāfī fī ʿilm al-Dīn*, Ibn Babawayh's (d. 991 CE) *Man la yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh* and al-Tūsī's (d. 1067 CE) *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, it can be seen that Shīʿī collections of legal traditions began at approximately the same time as those of the Sunnīs. As noted above, these works later acknowledged by the Sunnīs include those by Ibn Jurayj (d. 767 CE) in Mecca, Mālik b. Anas (d. 795 CE) in Medina, and Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā b. Abī Zāʾida (d. 798 CE) in Kūfa. More pertinently, the periods of the earliest authors concerned indicate that the emergence of a specifically Shīʿī interest in legal matters arose during the era of al-Ṣādiq.

If the notices of certain Shīʿī scholars may be considered authentic, there is yet further evidence of Shīʿī legal activity arising contemporaneous with al-Ṣādiq. Al-Najāshī and al-Kashshī refer to a number of relators of al-Ṣādiq's Ḥadīth as *fuqahāʾ*. The term *faqīh* was not from its inception associated with a legal specialist, but rather was applied to anyone of intelligence and understanding. Somewhat later, it was restricted to indicate a person versed in religion, a theologian. At a subsequent stage in the development of the term it was applied particularly to those with an understanding of religious law. This latter specialized meaning had long been current by the time that al-Najāshī and al-Kashshī were writing and is the meaning intended by them. Among the *fuqahāʾ* identified are Zurāra b. Aʿyan (d. 767 CE),⁶³ ʿAbd Allah b. Bukayr,⁶⁴ Ammār al-Sābāʾī,⁶⁵ Jamīl b. Darrāj,⁶⁶ the Kūfan Ḥammād b. ʿĪsā (d. 823 or 824 CE aged 90 years),⁶⁷ the Kūfan Ḥammād b. ʿUthmān (d. 806 CE),⁶⁸ the Kūfan Abān b. ʿUthmān,⁶⁹

was also a contemporary of ʿAlī al-Riḍā (*Fihrist*, 19) and a work entitled *al-Jāmiʿ fī Sāyir Abwāb al-Ḥalāl waʾl-Ḥarām* by the Kufan Zarīf al-Nāṣiḥ (*Rijāl*, 146-7).

⁵⁷ *Rijāl*, 84.

⁵⁸ *Rijāl*, 128.

⁵⁹ *Rijāl*, 226.

⁶⁰ *Rijāl*, 296.

⁶¹ *Rijāl*, 148.

⁶² *Fihrist*, 181.

⁶³ *Rijāl*, 125; see also *Maʾrifat al-Rijāl*, 375.

⁶⁴ *Rijāl*, 154; see also *Maʾrifat al-Rijāl*, 345, 375.

⁶⁵ *Rijāl*, 206; see also *Maʾrifat al-Rijāl*, 345.

⁶⁶ *Rijāl*, 92; see also *Maʾrifat al-Rijāl*, 375.

⁶⁷ *Rijāl*, 103; see also *Maʾrifat al-Rijāl*, 375.

⁶⁸ *Rijāl*, 104; see also *Maʾrifat al-Rijāl*, 375.

⁶⁹ *Rijāl*, 10; see also *Maʾrifat al-Rijāl*, 375.

Thaʿlaba b. Maymūn,⁷⁰ and Abān b. Taghlib (d. 758 CE) who al-Najāshī says was “a leader in the science of the Qurʾān, *fiqh* and Ḥadīth.”⁷¹ Al-Ṭūsī adds a further few names to this list, including the Kūfan ʿAbd Allah b. Shubruma⁷² and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan.⁷³

In addition to these, both al-Najāshī and al-Ṭūsī identify a number of companions of al-Ṣādiq who occupied the position of judge (*qāḍī*), which may perhaps be taken to indicate an interest in legal matters among them. Among the *qāḍīs* mentioned are the Kufans ʿUbayd b. ʿAbd Allah b. ʿĪsā,⁷⁴ Muʿāwiya b. Maysara b. Shurayḥ,⁷⁵ Nūḥ b. Darrāj al-Nakhaʿī⁷⁶ and Saʿd b. Ṭarīf al-Ḥanzalī,⁷⁷ the Baṣran ʿAmr b. Jumayʿ Abū ʿUthmān al-Azdī,⁷⁸ and al-Qāsim b. Bahrām Abū Hamdān,⁷⁹ Muʿāwiya b. Ṣāliḥ al-Andalusī⁸⁰ and Yaḥyā b. Yaʿqūb Abū Ṭālib.⁸¹

In a number of places al-Kashshī refers to some of the legal discussions which occurred during this time among al-Ṣādiq’s associates. For example, he mentions a debate which took place in Medina among a circle (*ḥalqa*) of persons including Zurāra b. Aʿyan, ʿAbd Allah b. Muḥammad and Rabīʿat al-Raʿī. This concerned the instruments used by the Prophet to administer punishment for the drinking of alcohol and how these differed from the instruments used by the judges of the day.⁸² Elsewhere, he describes how Abū Baṣīr asked al-Ṣādiq whether an illegitimate offspring is permitted to give testimony, remarking that al-Ḥakam b. ʿUṭayba considered this to be the case.⁸³

Aside from a reverence for the Ṭālibī family and an ostensible championing of their rights to the caliphate, the majority of those connected with early Shīʿism generally accepted the law and the ritual aspects of Islam as these were being elaborated. Prior to early Abbāsīd rule, the vari-

⁷⁰ *Rijāl*, 85; see also *Maʿrifat al-Rijāl*, 375 where he is described as “a well-known leader among the *ʿulamāʾ* and the *fuqahāʾ*”.

⁷¹ *Rijāl*, 7-8. Other relators from Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq who al-Najāshī also refers to as *fuqahāʾ* are Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq the “*faqīh min fuqahāʾinā*” (*Rijāl*, 20), Burayd b. Muʿāwiya (d. 767 CE) (p. 81), Thubayt b. Muḥammad who had “knowledge in *fiqh*” [*lahu ʿittilāʿ biʾl-*fiqh**] (p. 84), ʿAbd Allah b. Ghālib al-ʿAsadī (p. 154), Fadl b. Yasār (p. 219) and Manṣūr b. Ḥazim Abū Ayyūb al-Bajalī (p. 294). The *Maʿrifat al-Rijāl* also refers to other associates of al-Ṣādiq as *fuqahāʾ*, including al-Ḥakam b. ʿUṭayba (p. 210), Abū Baṣīr and Maʿrūf b. Kharrabūdh (p. 238) and the writer of the *Kitāb fiʾl-Ḥalāl waʾl-Ḥarām*, ʿAbd Allah b. Miskān (p. 375).

⁷² al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 228.

⁷³ al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 228.

⁷⁴ al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 240.

⁷⁵ al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 310; *Rijāl*, 292.

⁷⁶ al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 323.

⁷⁷ *Rijāl*, 127.

⁷⁸ al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 249.

⁷⁹ al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 274.

⁸⁰ al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 310.

⁸¹ al-Ṭūsī, *Rijāl*, 335.

⁸² *Maʿrifat al-Rijāl*, 153.

⁸³ *Maʿrifat al-Rijāl*, 209-10.

ous and discrete manifestations of Shī'ism were able to achieve comparatively little regarding the collection of a Shī'ī corpus of legal, ritual and doctrinal Ḥadīth. On the contrary, any coherent and widely-acknowledged intellectual expression of Shī'ism was scarcely to be distinguished from that of the majority of Muslims in the various centers of Islam.

But the tendency within Shī'ism during the last few decades of the Umayyad period towards a political quietism and a more speculative and reflective response received an additional fillip with the accession of the Abbāsids. This was due to the disappointment which ensued when the Khurasanian revolutionary movement failed to install the promised Ṭalibī caliphate and the futility of political activity, to the propaganda of the early Abbāsids which arrogated Shī'ī principles and hence called for a more rigorous definition of the Shī'a position, and to the enhanced attraction which Shī'ism assumed when the Abbāsids did not inaugurate the anticipated era of justice. These, allied to the universal interest in Ḥadīth as a means of articulating belief, resulted in the emergence of a more systematic Shī'ī doctrinal and religio-legal elaboration.

Evidence adduced here would appear to indicate that the period of the first Abbāsids witnessed the initial coalescence and dissemination of a Shī'ī corpus of Ḥadīth, even though the process was not to reach maturity until considerably later. Whatever datation is finally adopted, the emergence of Shī'ī Ḥadīth had a momentous effect on the future course of pro-Ṭalibī sentiment and was clearly fundamental to the crystallization of the various strands of Shī'ism into a sect. Had early Shī'ī adherents been unable to formulate and record a doctrinal position in contradistinction to the ruling dynasty and other interest groups, and to appropriate and record a code of norms based on the authority of the Imams, the likely result would have been fragmentation and ultimately dissolution. With doctrine comes legitimation and the body of religio-legal norms and dogma, along with the theory of the Imāmate which is epitomized in the Imam's position as the prime repository of this, meant that the Imams could be followed for good and sufficient reasons and defended against opponents on this basis.

A most important corollary of the nascent unification of doctrine was that it not only ultimately enabled the Shī'a to define orthodoxy, but also to define heterodoxy and thus to stigmatize and to discipline those who went beyond the confines of the tolerable. In this way the integrity of the majority group of Shī'a was largely maintained.

*Heriot-Watt University
Edinburgh, Scotland*

RON P. BUCKLEY



ARABIC AND THE WEST

In his pioneering study, *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said perceptively writes:

In everything I have been discussing, the language of Orientalism plays the dominant role. It brings opposites together as "natural," it presents human types in scholarly idioms and methodologies, it ascribes reality and reference to objects (other words) of its own making. Mythic language is discourse, that is, it cannot be anything but systematic; one does not really make discourse at will, or statements in it, without first belonging—in some cases unconsciously, but at any rate involuntarily—to the ideology and the institutions that guarantee its existence. Those latter are always the institutions of an advanced society dealing with a less advanced society, a strong culture encountering a weak one. The principal feature of mythic discourse is that it conceals its own origins as well as those of what it describes. "Arabs" are presented in the imagery of static, almost ideal types, and neither as creatures with a potential in the process of being realized nor as history being made. The exaggerated value heaped upon Arabic as a language permits the Orientalist to make the language equivalent to mind, society, history, and nature. For the Orientalist the language *speaks* the Arab Oriental, not vice versa.¹

Not only the Arabic language, but also the religion to which it is correlated (Islam) has been animated by certain rituals, perceptions, and doctrines of Orientalism.² Elsewhere, I have argued that for centuries, and until relatively recently, it was through hostility and suspicion—cultural and otherwise—that the West tended to view the Muslim Orient.³ As can be expected, outright hostility results in bitter prejudice, and prejudice in blind cultural aversion. It should be no surprise, therefore, that the West heavily elaborated its cultural and intellectual polemic against the Muslim East.⁴ I have extensively written on literary Orientalism and on the al-

¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 321.

² Orientalism may be generally defined as a body of Western cultural and ideological beliefs and ideas about the Muslim Orient. I should, however, emphasize the point that the word (Orientalism) has ideological rather than geographical associations—ideological in the sense that it involves more of historical, religious, cultural, philological, and political issues than geographical.

³ For more on this point, see my article, "A Reflection on and Analysis of Western Literary Sources on Islam," *The International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies* 2, 2 (1985): 47-67.

⁴ Such terms as "Orient" and "East" have been interchangeably used throughout this article.

most invariable Orientalist emphases or assertions that amount to what can only be called a distorted image of the region in its entirety, and the Arabic language is no exception.⁵ Studies of Arabic in the West made by English-speaking Orientalists (or Arabists as some may prefer to say) have generally borne the full burden of the Orientalist tradition and are marked by unwitty misapprehension or, at best, by unpardonable ignorance. As ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād rightly observes, some specialists of the Arabic language in the West are indeed ignorant of it simply because they cannot feel it or capture its spirit through the rules of language.⁶ For the Orientalist tradition was constituted and fashioned from the centuries-old antipathy and prejudice, eventually reducible to political and cultural antagonism perhaps even more so today than ever before. This antagonism is articulated in such a way that the Orient, both the culture and the language, are generally analyzed, codified, classified, examined, and identified within an Orientalist framework of "otherness." It is indeed this very conception of otherness which, to use Said's words, "promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')."⁷ It is the purpose of this article to look at the present state of scholarship on the Arabic language by Arabists and Islamists in the West.

Arabic has been a fertile and intriguing subject for Orientalist thought and tradition, so much so that the language itself has become emblematic of Arab culture, society, and psychology. And one cannot disavow the unfortunate fact that antecedents of Arabic and Islamic studies in the West are rooted in bitter hatred and blind hostility, exhibited in abusive and unflattering representations of the Arab and, naturally, Muslim culture. Long and close contact with the Arabs during the most dramatic confrontation of the East and West, the Crusades, unavoidably forced these representations.⁸ Nor were they mellowed by the advent of presumably sound and objective scholarship. The cultivation of the study of Arabic in the Western universities, the translation of Greek science from Arabic, and the emergence of a seemingly more tolerant diplomatic and commercial intercourse with the Orient yielded no betterment! On the whole, spurious representations continued to be unabated until very recent times, and even now they have not completely lost their influence.

⁵ For an overview of the author's work, see "The Muslim Orient on the American Literary Scene: A Bibliographical Note," *American Studies International*, 26, 2 (1988): 25-36.

⁶ ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād, *Ḥaqāiq al-Islām wa-Abṭālu Khusūmihi*, 2nd ed. (Cairo, 1962), 178-9.

⁷ *Orientalism*, 43.

⁸ For a careful examination, see Dana C. Munro, "The Western Attitude toward Islam During the Period of the Crusades," *Speculum* VI, 3 (1931): 329-43. Also helpful is Jonathan Riley-Smith's *What Were the Crusades?* (London: Macmillan, 1977).

Instead of mellowing the on-going antipathy, the colonial expansion of the West into the Orient sought to aggravate it even more. But there was a redeeming touch in the publication and translation of Arabic texts, even though many of these translations were intended neither as a vehicle for better understanding, nor as a means for softening prejudice; they were used as a tool to serve the pernicious needs of the Orientalists.⁹

In my view, the Orientalist is a manipulating outsider bound to study and interpret Arabic as a foreign object, and to judge it in terms of its success, or failure, in the context of certain cultural and linguistic forces. He will not reflect upon Arabic as he will upon his own tongue, be it English, French, German, or other. Further, the Orientalist is likely to object to the notion that he should engage in the Arab's view of his own language, presumably on the grounds that his scholarly "objectivity" would be eroded.

The Orientalist interest in Arabic goes all the way back to medieval Europe's missionary, Ramon Lull (1235-1315?), the founder of a school of Arabic and other languages, who advocated learning Arabic as the best means for conversation with the Arabs, and he suggested that a chair for teaching Arabic should be created at the leading universities of his day. But even though his suggestion virtually remained without effect, as there were few teachers of Oriental languages, it revealed the growth of an idea of Arabic in the West.¹⁰ Even earlier, on his visit to Spain, about 1141, Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, had already witnessed the civilization of the Arab Saracens and determined to translate the Qur'ān to see what it offered.¹¹ The translation, made by three Christian scholars, aided by a Christian Arab, was inaccurate and faulty. But it held an important place as the first attempt at an interpretation of the Qur'ān in the West, until the early eighteenth century, when George Sale's renowned version of the Qur'ān appeared in London in 1734, published in the hope of enabling the Church to refute the Book of Muḥammad.¹² In 1951, H.A.R. Gibb "contributed an essay to a book significantly entitled *The Near East and the Great Powers* in which he tried to explain the need for a greater expansion in Western programs of Oriental studies. . . . 'We have to learn

⁹ For a very useful study, see Maxime Rodinson, "The Western Image and Western Studies of Islam," in *The Legacy of Islam*, ed. Joseph Schacht and C.E. Bosworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 9-62.

¹⁰ On this point see Philip Hitti, *Islam and the West* (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand Co., 1962), 52. And for a comprehensive selection of Lull's writings see *Selected Works of Ramon Lull*, ed. and trans. Anthony Bonner (Princeton University Press, 1985).

¹¹ See James T. Addison, *The Christian Approach to the Moslem* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 35.

¹² George Sale, Trans. *The Koran Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammed*, 6th ed (1734; rpt. Philadelphia: Lippincott and Co., 1876).

about them [by means of their language perhaps] so that we can learn to work with them [the peoples of Asia and Africa or of Eastern Europe, obviously including the Arabs] in a relationship that is closer to terms of mutuality."¹³ Certainly, in Gibb's day Oriental studies were to be thought of not so much as purely scholarly activities, but as an instrument of colonial policy. For the Orientalist was the guide of missionaries, travelers, merchants, policy makers, diplomats, and scholars as well. As Sayyid Muhammad Syeed observes, Oriental studies were made to be "a tool to be used by colonists, politicians, missionaries, and ethnocentric interest groups to promote their ideologies and impose their languages and cultural and religious standards."¹⁴ In brief, what mattered most was not the Orientalists' "objective" work, but its adaptability for pragmatic use within a framework of Orientalism.

Arabic may be broadly defined as the language of the Arabs. Professor Kamal Salibi comments in an article on Arab history: "Whatever is Arab, certainly, must be defined in terms of the Arabic language; and that, somehow, Islam must also enter into definition. . . . After all, the Arabs today are people who speak Arabic, and the overwhelming majority among them are Muslims."¹⁵ That most Arabs are Muslims, and that their language is Arabic, can hardly be questioned. But what is Arabic to non-Arabs and to non-Muslims? Let us now see how "with their sound linguistic scholarship"¹⁶ quasi-Arabists and Orientalists have availed themselves of an idea of Arabic both as a language and as a medium of culture. Certainly, the positive achievements of the Orientalists have carefully been studied and often praised, both in the East and in the West. But room must be allowed for a critique of their "prejudices." They are, after all, only human, and highly susceptible to their societies' ideologies and systems of thought. Since this article is not meant to be a survey of all the work that has been done by the Orientalists on Arabic, I have been sharply selective in the choice of texts to be reviewed here.

I begin by quoting A.L. Tibawi: "But what Arabic is studied or taught [in the West] by specialists in Arabic?"¹⁷ Tibawi rather sarcastically answers:

¹³ Said, *Orientalism*, 275. The reference is to H.A.R. Gibb, "Oriental Studies in the United Kingdom," in *The Near East and the Great Powers*, ed. Richard N. Frye (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), 86-7. On Gibb see Albert Hourani, "H.A.R. Gibb: The Vocation of an Orientalist," in *Europe and the Middle East* (Berkeley, California, 1980), 104-34.

¹⁴ Sayyid M. Syeed, "Islamization of Linguistics," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 3, 1 (1986): 77-87.

¹⁵ Kamal Salibi, "What Are the Arabs?" *Dirasat* XIV, 4 (1987): 7.

¹⁶ See *Orientalism and History*, ed. Denis Sinor, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), xvii.

¹⁷ A.L. Tibawi, "Second Critique of English-Speaking Orientalists and Their Approach to Islam and the Arabs," *The Islamic Quarterly* XXIII, 1 (1979): 12. A.L. Tibawi, "Second Critique of English-Speaking Orientalists and Their Approach to Islam and the Arabs," *The Islamic Quarterly* VIII, 3-4 (1964): 73-88.

It has long been an academic scandal that the professor [i.e., the specialist] of Arabic teaches [and at length knows] no Arabic and neglects to write on Arabic subjects, is moreover never seen to write or heard to speak Arabic, and yet engages in theological and political [and linguistic] controversy . . .¹⁸

That there are quasi-Arabists whose knowledge of Arabic is insufficient and who do not have the training to teach the language adequately and dispassionately is indeed quite likely. But, as Tibawi is suggesting here, they engage in cultural controversy—linguistic and otherwise:

In 1948 a Professor of Arabic in the University of London was going to Damascus and desired to give a speech in Arabic there, and requested my assistance for translating it from English. . . The Professor's translation had to be discarded and I started from scratch, both translating and editing. For example, I advised the omission of a rash reference to the events of 1860 as inappropriate in Damascus (!) The Professor and I went over the English original and my translation and editing and he enthusiastically approved all that I did. . . A few years later he began preparing a translation of the *Sirah* [i.e., the life] of the Prophet.¹⁹

The poor quality is perhaps less puzzling than his later decision to undertake a translation of the life of the Prophet that contained even "slips in English [!]"²⁰

Equally embarrassing, is another case. Tibawi adds:

In 1960 I met at Harvard a visiting scholar from the University California. He told me he was working on an edition and translation of a unique Budleian Arabic manuscript by a Damascene author concerned with the reign of the Mamluk Sultan Barquq. One day he asked me whether I could help him to understand a sentence in which the key word was written *alief-lam-ain-nun* (= the eye) preceded by the name of Tamerlane. After a glance I told the enquirer that there was an orthographical mistake by the omission of another *lam* the key word should read *al-lam* (the accursed). I saw immediate signs of subdued humiliation in his face.²¹

In the examination of more recent studies and analyses of Arabic, it is important to place them within the ideological context of Orientalism. In general, recent studies of Arabic in the West demonstrate a lack of scholarship on the one hand, and a lack of humility on the other. They, like

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

their antecedents, still treat the Arabs, Arabic, Arab history and culture according to Western categories that produced in the past, and continue to produce, distorted and false interpretations of all that is related to Arabic and Islam.

In an article, "Parataxis in Arabic: Modification as a Model for Persuasion," the author gives herself the liberty of examining the strategies the Arab uses for persuasion, strategies that are constrained by "psychological and historical factors."²² Barbara Johnstone claims at the very outset:

Arabic persuasive discourse... is rhetorically effective through paratactic repetition. An idea is made believable by being stated, re-stated, and paraphrased; Arabic authors use a great deal of co-ordination, and very little of the subordination which is so highly valued in English persuasive writing.... Arabic persuasive discourse is complexly repetitive and almost entirely paratactic.²³

The texts the author has examined in her article were written well into the second half of the twentieth century and are intended for a general Arab literate audience. But the point I want to emphasize is that the author has dealt with Arabic according to Western measures and categories. Even though she is looking into Arabic paratactic repetition, Johnstone is unable to free herself from juxtaposing two entirely different languages: Arabic (the unfamiliar; the language she examines) and English (the familiar; the native language she writes and speaks). Arabic is measured against English in this particular regard and the result she finds is: Arabic authors use in their writing "very little of the subordination which is so highly valued in English persuasive writing." To illustrate her argument that Arabic persuasive discourse is both repetitive and paratactic, she goes on to discuss an example taken from a work of literary criticism by an Arab author, Shawqī Ḍayf:

wa ka'annahu yara anna al-adaba aljadira
and as if he thinks that the literature worthy

bi-hatha al-ismi, huwa allathi yaragu al-Sama
of this the name it that which delights the hearing

kama yarugu al-qalba fi anin wahidin: wa-buwa
as delights the heart at time one and he

lithalike yuwaffiru li-sawtihi kulla jamalin mumkinin.
thus furnished of sound its all beauty possible.

²² Barbara Johnstone, "Parataxis in Arabic: Modification as a Model for Persuasion," *Studies in Language* 11, 1 (1987): 85.

²³ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

(And it is as if he thinks that literature worthy of the name is that which delights the hearing as it delights the heart at one time: and he thus furnishes its sound with all possible beauty.)²⁴

Availing herself of this example, Johnstone wants to demonstrate here that there is a great deal of repetition which is obvious as the sentence reads: *huwa allathi yaruqu... wa-huwa li-thalika yuwaffiru...* (that which delights... and he thus furnishes...); repetition lies in a conjoined double: *huwa wa-huwa*. Johnstone also finds another repetition in this same sentence: *yarugu al-sama kama yarugu alqalba* (delights the hearing as it delights the heart); *yarugu* and *yaragu*. We are reminded that the sentence Johnstone has chosen is composed with coordinating conjunctions such as *wa* (and), and *kama* (as). The question is: to what end or ends, is Johnstone pushing her argument? Even if Arabic is characterized by paratactic juxtaposition of items to ensure persuasion, is not this persuasion a strategy that has a function in itself? In English, is not there an obvious repetitive set of items in such cases as: "and to say this is to say so and so," and "while he says this he also says so and so?" To be sure, there are cases in which English, and not just Arabic, calls for paratactic repetition.

Examining parataxis in syntax, Johnstone employs a set of examples which suggest that "the syntax of a number of kinds of verbal and nominal modifications in Arabic is paratactic."²⁵ Here are two examples:

- (1) *taxtalifu* *ixtilafan* *asasiyyan*
differs a differing basic
(basically differs)

- (2) *kanu* *iltazamu* *al-mabda'a* *ashadda* *al-iltizami*
were adhered to the principle strongest adherence
(they had adhered the most strongly to the principle)²⁶

In the two cases above there is a structure in which a verbal form is accompanied by a verbal noun from the same root. In this way the verbal form *taxtalifu* is paratactically followed by the verbal noun *ixtilafan*; *iltazamu* by *al-iltizami*. That in this particular instance Arabic discourse is both paratactic and repetitive can not be denied. But do we not get almost the same kind of repetition in English when we say, for example, "He himself has done it," and "you yourself have told me this"? In effect Johnstone has repeated herself several times in her article to prove that persuasive discourse in Arabic is characterized by paratactic juxtaposition

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

of ideas couched in parallel words, phrases, and clauses, and that Arabic modificational syntax is also characterized by paratactic juxtaposition.²⁷

More recently, in an article on "A Bedouin Narrative from Central Sinai," Frank H. Stewart, described as an ethnologist who is interested in the traditional unwritten law of the Bedouins, told the tale of a Sinai Bedouin, Hajj Sleman Ibn Aliyyan al-Gsayyir (d. 1985), a member of the Ahaywat tribe of east central Sinai. The tale, Frank Stewart explains, has some basis in history; it appears in C.S. Jarvis' book *Yesterday and Today in Sinai* (1931), whose events were recorded when Jarvis was governor of Sinai from 1923 to 1936. Jarvis' version of the story is of a Bedouin, apparently Hajj Sleman, "an unsavoury-looking rascal with cross eyes," who almost killed a policeman, a certain Nagm, in a fight over a girl.²⁸ In the course of ethnological fieldwork that Frank Stewart carried out between 1976 and 1982 among the Ahaywats, he was fortunate to encounter Hajj Sleman himself, the protagonist of his and Jarvis' narrative, and he asked Sleman about the event. Whether Sleman's narrative is substantially accurate or not is not our concern here. The question is in how far Stewart's own record of the incidents of the tale can be trusted. To a Westerner the story is simply a tale of jealousy, and it is immediately comprehensible as such. From the point of view of Hajj Sleman it is a different matter altogether. For the dispute was about a woman of his tribe who went out to pasture, and when she was out at the pasture a fellow-tribesman (Nagm) was attached to her; he wanted to have an affair! As a closer relative of the woman, Sleman deemed it his duty to warn Nagm to keep away from the woman to avoid dishonor. (Men and women are very much segregated in Bedouin societies, and any kind of possible sexual relationship outside marriage is highly disgraceful and licentious.) The duty to protect a woman's virtue and honor is not limited to her immediate relatives, but it extends to *a//* her Bedouin relatives, men and women alike. Therefore, Sleman attacked Nagm simply because he believed it was his duty to protect his kinswoman's honor.

Stewart's account goes well beyond this. No tale suggests a stereotypical image of the Bedouin as a barbarian, savage, treacherous, sensual, strange, and curious object, fascinating but inexplicable, so different that he almost seems to be from another planet!²⁹ Hajj Sleman is, according to Stewart, "notoriously hotheaded and pugnacious, and it seems likely that he jumped at the opportunity that was offered him," a man who can only

²⁷ See, for instance, 88, 90, 93, and 94 in Johnstone's article

²⁸ Frank H. Stewart, "A Bedouin Narrative from Central Sinai," *Journal of Arabic Linguistics* 16 (1987): 44.

²⁹ For a good introduction to this debate, see Willard G. Oxtoby, "Western Perceptions of Islam and the Arabs," in *The American Media and the Arabs*, ed. Hudson and Wolfe (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1980).

be associated with "blood-lust."³⁰ In Stewart's article, Sleman's account is transcribed phonetically as part of the author's work on the Bedouin dialect, but that aspect of his article is not the concern of this article.³¹ My intent is to show that in the course of the narrative Hajj Sleman strikes us not only as a blood-thirsty Bedouin, but as a liar as well! Stewart writes: "Sleman makes no bones about lying in order to achieve his ends; the Bedouin notion of a white lie is somewhat more extensive than our own, and one may hear sayings such as 'Lying is the salt of men,' i.e., it is like the salt that is added to bread to give it flavor, and 'Lying is not a disgrace'."³² Such a disgraceful attitude toward the Bedouin Arabs does not require any commentary: it speaks for itself.

A much more intriguing and ideologically revealing study of Arabic is E. Shouby's renowned "The Influence of the Arabic Language on the Psychology of the Arabs." Shouby is introduced in the article as "a psychologist with training in both Clinical and Social Psychology." The argument he proposes is intended to "provoke interest and open new vistas for research" into the influence that Arabic exerts upon the psychology of the Arabs. A glance at the subheadings of Shouby's essay tells us a great deal of his intent. To him, Arabic is characterized by "General Vagueness of Thought," "Overemphasis on Linguistic Signs," "Overassertion and Exaggeration." Shouby's polemical, not scholarly, purpose is to show at the outset that Arabic is,

ill suited to the material and concrete aspects of modern life. Not even the greatest scholar could give literary Arabic names to all the contraptions and devices found in a modern household, let alone the thousand and one things that are to be seen in the office, in the factory, under the hood of a car, in the laboratory, or in any other creation of modern civilization. By borrowing words from foreign languages, or by coining new words on the one hand, and by restoring to circumlocution on the other, an Arab may be able to convey his meaning. . . .³³

Shouby's argument "is lamentably simple-minded, perhaps because he has no notion of what language is and how it operates."³⁴ It is full of naivety and condescension. The author has apparently forgotten the fact that languages, English is included, borrow from each other. Let me cite, as ex-

³⁰ Frank H. Stewart, "A Bedouin Narrative," 46

³¹ Readers who may be interested in the phonetic transcription of the story as given by Frank Stewart should see *ibid.*, 52-89

³² *Ibid.*, 55.

³³ E. Shouby, "The Influence of the Arabic Language on the Psychology of the Arabs." *The Middle East Journal* 5, 3 (1951): 286

³⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 320.

amples, words that English has *borrowed* from Arabic: cotton, camphor, henna, alchemy, elixir, almanac, syrup, lemon, algebra, jar, alcohol, coffee, cable, schedule, cave, sofa, alcove, gazelle—to mention only a few words.³⁵ How, then, is borrowing words from other languages or coining new ones a condemnation? Shouby goes on to say that Arabic seems to “overemphasize the significance of words as such, paying less regard to their meaning than is usually the case in Western literatures and languages.”³⁶ In his eyes, Arabic is characterized by “a rather primitive globality, diffuseness, and rigidity.”³⁷ Suffice it to say, as Edward Said remarks, that “such a result which can be attained by philological means testifies to the sad end of a formerly complex philological tradition, exemplified today only in very rare individuals. The reliance of today’s Orientalist on ‘philology’ is the last infirmity of a scholarly discipline completely transformed into social-science ideological expertise.”³⁸

Towards the end of the essay, Shouby concludes:

In the first place, the Arabs are forced to overassert and exaggerate in almost all types of communication, as otherwise they stand a good chance of being gravely misunderstood. If an Arab says exactly what he means without the expected exaggeration, other Arabs may still think that he means the opposite. This fact leads to misunderstanding on the part of non-Arabs who do not realize that the Arab speaker is merely following a linguistic tradition. Secondly, we have the corollary of the first: the failure of the Arabs to realize that others mean exactly what they say if it is put in a simple, unelaborated manner; even repetition may not be enough for an Arab to realize that the communication cannot perhaps mean the opposite of what the speaker intends.³⁸

That the Arabs “are forced to overassert and exaggerate in almost *all types of communication* [italics mine]” is in itself an evident overassertion and exaggeration! Throughout his paper, Shouby never illustrates or supports the argument that the Arabs exaggerate; or, to be more specific, he does not cite examples from such types of communication where the Arabs “are forced to overassert and exaggerate.” One can not help but conclude that Shouby’s argument is awkward and prejudicial in the extreme.

Similar, though different in form, is Bernard Lewis’s essay “Islamic Concepts of Revolution.”³⁹ After he has “carefully” examined such con-

³⁵ See Joseph M. Williams, *Origins of the English Language. A Social and Linguistic History* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 101.

³⁶ Shouby, “The Influence,” 295.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 299.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 300.

³⁹ Said’s discussion of Bernard Lewis’ approach, *Orientalism*, 314-15, includes a criticism of the passage on *thawra* quoted below. On Lewis see also the chapter entitled “Bernard Lewis and Islamic Studies: An Assessment,” in *Orientalism, Islam, and Islamists*, ed. Asaf Hussain and others (Brattleboro: Amana Books, 1984).

cepts as *dawla*, *fitna*, and *bughāt*, Lewis also examines and describes the meaning of *thawra* at the very end of his essay.

In the Arabic-speaking countries a different word was used for [revolution] *thawra*. The root *th-w-r* in classical Arabic meant to rise up (e.g. of a camel), to be stirred or excited, and hence, especially in Maghribi usage, to rebel. . . . The noun *thawra* at first means excitement, as in the phrase, cited in the *Sihah*, a standard medieval Arabic dictionary, *intazir hatta taskun hadhihi al-thawra*, wait till this excitement dies down—a very apt recommendation. The verb is used by al-Ijī, in the form of *thawaran* of *itharat fitna*, stirring up sedition, as one of the dangers which should discourage a man from practising the duty of resistance to bad government.⁴⁰

Lewis' intention is to associate the concept of "revolution" with nothing more noticeable than a camel raising itself from the ground! He then gives a goodly number of possible associations such as excitement, sedition, and resistance. Lewis's surprisingly abrupt remark "wait till the excitement dies down" is not without cynicism, and his comment that this is "a very apt recommendation" is even more frustrating. Whatever the word means, Lewis's "sarcastic scholarship" cannot go unnoticed. The association of the word, on Lewis's part, with camels and with excitement (not with political, *human* struggle) "hints much more broadly than is usual for him that the Arab is scarcely more than a neurotic, sexual being. Each of the words or phrases he uses to describe revolution is tinged with sexuality *stirred, excited, rising-up.*" A prolific scholar like Bernard Lewis, who distinguishes himself as an established historian of what he calls the Middle East, must be aware that his choice of words is slippery, and it has much more belittling and devastating nuances than one may imagine at first.

It must, in conclusion, be emphasized that Western understanding of Arabic has always suffered from much the same stereotyping and exoticism as that of Chinese, aggravated perhaps by historical, political, and religious factors. In a review of Jonathan Raban's *Arabia: A Journey through the Labyrinth* (1979),⁴¹ one encounters generalizations like the following: "The very language of Arabia, according to the author, is a labyrinth of ambiguities in which there are hardly any literal meanings, only symbolic gestures. It is a language in which the same word, with a slightly different inflection, means both 'sexual intercourse' and 'socialism'. Is it any won-

⁴⁰ Bernard Lewis, "Islamic Concepts of Revolution," in *Revolution in the Middle East*, ed. P.J. Vatikiotis (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972), 38-9

⁴¹ Jonathan Raban lectured on English and American literature at the University College of Wales before he became a full-time writer in 1969. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and he now lives in London.

der that Arabs are difficult to understand ?"⁴² As we see, it has not been unnatural for Western "specialists" who are concerned with Arabic to go on to adopt the centuries-old view that the language the Arabs speak, write, understand, use, and in which they communicate, is merely "a labyrinth of [exotic and fabulous] ambiguities." This kind of description is clearly intellectually discreditable—it turns Arabic into a "mythic" language, that is to say, expressive of a "myth" created by Orientalism and the Orientalists.

Department of English Language and Literature
U.A.E. University
Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates

MARWAN M. OBEIDAT



⁴² Anatole Broyard, *New York Times* 26 (1979): IX.

REVIEW ARTICLE

Islam and Democracy. BY JOHN L. ESPOSITO AND JOHN O. VOLL. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Pp. 223 with notes. \$17.95 Paper.

The study of Islam cannot be confined to a limited number of countries that are commonly perceived as Islamically-oriented, namely, from a Western perspective, those places that appear to be constantly embroiled in discontent: Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Egypt, or, perhaps more accurately, those places that unfortunately happen to fall within that negatively-laden phrase, the Middle East. Of course, Islamic presence extends beyond its Western-imposed boundaries. In light of this realization, John Voll and John Esposito have chosen six countries (Iran, Sudan, Pakistan, Malaysia, Algeria, and Egypt) to represent their examination into variant versions of the Islamic struggle to reconcile democracy within a religious-political context. These diverse countries have experienced markedly different approaches to apprehending democracy within an Islamic context. In a now-classic dispute between Islamic ideals and Western infiltration, Islamic countries continue to struggle to maintain their own identity while transforming into a new era of Islamic politics. Voll and Esposito comprehensively capture the internal conflict that plagues these countries. Most importantly, they place modern disputes within an historical context that further explains the reasons and methods behind such disagreements. In an easily understood, densely filled comparison, *Islam and Democracy* offers its readers invaluable insight into the ordeal of Islamic countries *from* a perspective which neither judges nor condescends, but simply explains.

Perhaps the "most important global political development of the late twentieth century is the emergence of pro-democracy movements throughout the world" (11). Islamic countries are not isolated in their push to incorporate democracy into their political schema. People across the globe have developed a sense of the need for empowerment in government and politics, and, consequently, democratization has begun to flourish. The unfortunate aspect of this progress is the insistence of America and much of Europe that their model of democracy is the only one that exists. Fundamentally, Islam would fail within an American democratic prototype. However, this fact does not exclude Islam from utilizing its own type of democracy. Voll and Esposito note:

The two processes are contradictory and competitive only if "democracy" is defined in a highly restricted way and is viewed as possible only if specific Western European or American institutions are adopted, or if important Islamic principles are defined in a rigid and traditional manner (21).

This assessment is vital to achieving a comprehension of political discourse in an Islamic country. There is no "our way or no way", but rather, a necessary compromise that will lend itself to the involvement of many elements existing in Islamic society.

Islamic political perspectives must be understood within the framework of *tawḥīd* (Unity of God), *risāla* (Prophethood), and *khilāfa* (Caliphate). Universally, Muslims agree that *tawḥīd* is the core of Islamic belief and practice. Mawdūdī explained that if he could coin a new term, he would use "theo-democracy" to explain the concept of an Islamically-based democracy. Additionally, the principle of *Khilāfa* insists upon the necessity of consultation, *ijmāʿ* (consensus), and *ijtihād* (informed, independent judgment) within Islamic society. Consequently, those elements become "crucial concepts for the articulation of Islamic democracy within the framework of the oneness of God and the representational obligations of human beings" (30). Each item shapes a Muslim understanding of true democracy, reinforcing the notion that no Western democratic model can be transplanted within a Muslim society and be expected to work, nor can Islamic democracy be "simply reformulations of Western perceptions in some Muslim idiom" (31).

In a complex examination of the inevitability of opposition groups arising in response to any government, Voll and Esposito conclude that "the concept of opposition within democracy continues to be ambiguous: both recognized as essential and mistrusted as divisive and possibly subversive" (39). In any society, the limitations placed upon acceptable forms of opposition are constantly contested and pressed by reformers. Ideally, opposition falls within a legitimate framework understood by all participants. Yet, as the entire world has experienced, this is not always the case. In an Islamic context, the authority of the Qurʾān and the Sunna are the basis for various critiques of society throughout its history. However, two concepts extend beyond that foundation to define Islamic discourse: *fitna* or civil disorder, and *ikhtilāf*, or disagreement. *Fitna* is to be violently opposed and sets the absolute limit upon the type of disagreement allowable in Islam. *Ikhtilāf*, in contrast, is acceptable in its allowance of a diversity of opinions. All modern scholars agree with al-Bannā "on the necessity of unity on fundamental principles while accepting disagreements on subsidiary issues" (45), while maintaining that *ikhtilāf* is actually a benefit to society in promoting the flexibility of the system.

Utilizing this background as a foundation for their study, Voll and Esposito progress their inquiry into the specific analysis of various Islamically-oriented countries, beginning with Iran. As a powerful symbol of revolutionary Islam, Iran's "experience and example provide an important case study of modern political Islam in practice" (52). A Shī'ī country run by a shah (1941-1979) who became increasingly dependent upon the West, Iran suffered from what James Bill labeled "a reign of terror" (55). Power landed into the laps of the shah and secular, Westernized elites, and consequently, the *ʿulamāʾ*'s power began to devolve. By 1962-63, the Ayatollah Khomeini emerged as the spokesman for the *ʿulamāʾ* and their essential involvement in politics. Opposition to the shah grew as people began to examine their identity and faith. The Ayatollah subsequently came into power, and the years 1979-1981 marked the installment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The final version of Khomeini's constitution was ratified on November, 1979, and "established the ultimate authority of clerics in the management and guidance of the state" (63). Thus, Iran witnessed two extremes as represented by the secular approach of the shah and the thrust of religion in the rule of Khomeini. Although on paper the constitution allowed for political debate and a governmental separation of powers, in practice any form of opposition was banned, Khomeini was named *faqih* for life, minorities were persecuted, and the militant clergy held complete control of the government. Consequently, "a royal reign of terror" was replaced by a "clerical reign of terror; only the political actors or players changed, not the practices" (70). Iran's attempt at democracy, superficial at best, is interesting when viewed within the juxtaposition of practices between the shah and Khomeini. Although promoting completely different governmental perspectives, the effects of each reign were essentially the same.

The Sudan suffers from a very turbulent and erratic history. A country composed of people spanning numerous different languages and ethnicities, it seeks unity through religion and religious appeals. Plagued by various sectarian parties but identified primarily with Ḥasan al-Turābī and the Muslim Brotherhood movement, Sudan engendered from British rule which ended in 1956. Attempting to utilize a parliamentary system founded in that era, Sudan inherited a government that developed into an inherently weak and unstable construct. Parliamentary politics have risen and fallen within the country, and as a result, Islamic organizations have emerged "advocating the establishment of a democratic and Islamic republic in Sudan" (84). With no viable secular alternative, Islamic resurgence became recognized in the National Islamic Front under the leadership of Ḥasan al-Turābī in the 1990s.

The Muslim Brotherhood movement had emerged in the early 1950s with its ultimate goal being the establishment of an Islamic order in Sudan.

By 1969, their strength had degenerated and a new military regime came into power that same year. The dynamics between the new government, opposition groups and Turābī would grow and die, but the struggle would not. Throughout its violent history, Sudan would plateau and then regress to its precedential politics of "shifting coalitions and rivalries" (94). The continuing civil war in the country created additional problems, and seemingly no compromise could be reached to reconcile the cries of secularism and Islamism. The 1990s have brought to the forefront a new regime with the goal of creating a "new-style political system" (98). With a "mixed record" (100), the National Salvation Front has inherited many problems unique to the country. Not only does Sudan battle between secular and Islamic models of government, but sectarian opposition has created a third alternative. As the most popular choice, sectarianism failed to provide the unity desired by the country, and as a result, has repeatedly ended with military coups. Considering the multidimensional experience of the state, Voll and Esposito label the true conflict as "between different options for defining the relationship between Islam and democracy in the Sudanese context" (101). The Sudanese context, however, is so multifaceted that it needs to create an inclusive regime that will recognize all of its elements. That goal is extremely difficult.

"Since its creation, Pakistan has struggled with the meaning and implications of its Islamic identity, from the Muslim nationalism of its early years to the 'Islamic systems' of the 1970s and 1980s... Islamic activist leaders and parties divide rather than unite" (121, 123). This statement briefly encapsulates the troubled history of Pakistan as it struggled to maintain a republic in name only. Despite the implementation of one constitution after another, "much of Pakistan's history has been spent under martial law" (105). From the contrast between the theories of Jinnah and Iqbal to the recently deposed Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan has fought to define its Muslim identity. This task has not been easy to accomplish, as people have discovered that the injunction of Islam can be used for political as well as religious means. As seen in the reign of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto:

... the price for improved relations with the old sheikhdoms included the public promotion of Islam. The Bhutto government obliged... [his] promotion of Islam outraged religious leaders, who regarded his appeal to Islam as personally hypocritical and politically opportunistic. (107)

Continued through the reign of Zia ul-Haq, Islam was propagated for primarily political purposes, creating "an Islamic facade" (111). The result was more division rather than unification. Through a continued network of inefficient rulers and deeper strife, "Islamization failed to foster a national unity that transcended Pakistan's ethnic-regional divisions" (119).

Before any seemingly democratic initiatives can be achieved, Muslims must first reach a consensus on the implementation of Islam at a national level.

Malaysia, dominated by Muslims, has long been a place of thriving multi-culturalism and recognizable minority contingencies. While the constitution of 1957 defined a Malay as "a person who confesses the Muslim religion. . ." (125), it also allowed non-Muslims to practice freely, so long as they did not evangelize their faith to the Muslim community. Through the combination of international events and the development of mass communication, the Malays became more conscious of their Muslim heritage and sought to be more expressive of it. A variety of movements erupted with the more moderate of the pack continuing to recognize Malaysia's multi-ethnicity. Politicians, however, realized the importance of the resurgence and began to identify the government more visibly with Islam. In 1981, Muhammad Mahathir was elected prime minister and he directed the "government firmly on a more Islamically oriented path" (137). Mahathir, extremely critical of the West, staunchly advocated a government of democracy. However, at the same time, he firmly believed in a model of democracy different than the West's, which he believed failed when it secularized religion. As a result, he turned to Asian values as vital to the perpetuation of Malaysian culture. This method appears beneficial, and yet, the population still harbors concerns over his increasing emphasis upon Islam. As the authors conclusively decide, such a disparity is cause for minority resurgence and revivalism.

Algeria emerged from over a century of French occupation as a state with an ambiguous identity. Some citizens continued to identify with the French while others returned to an Arabic heritage, resulting in an increased tension that would pit one person against another in a bitter dispute over individual validation. Social tensions between the educated elite and the poorer populace brewed and public demonstrations ensued. Within this context, the Islamic Salvation Front emerged as the spokesperson for Islam's promotion of social justice. However, the group itself suffered from a clearly divided leadership despite its unifying call to a wide diversity of people. In spite of its weakness, FIS dominated politics in Algeria. Its continued success sparked a government crackdown, resulting in the arrest of both of its leaders and the suppression of its demonstrations. In the subsequent set of elections, FIS again emerged victorious and the Algerian military, deciding differently, forced the President to resign and turned FIS from "a legal opposition to a combative, and, in some segments, revolutionary movement" (167). FIS consequently split into various factions and violence erupted. Any further attempts at reconciliation have failed and the state continues in its torrid condition.

Egypt is the final study of Voll and Esposito. The history of Egypt reflects a perpetual tension between the Muslim Brotherhood and the presi-

dent, be it Nasser, Sādāt, or Mubārak. Mubārak climaxed the oppression of Islamic movements, harassing and imprisoning members of such movements in order to pacify them. However, Islamic organizations grew rapidly, becoming "effective agents of social and political change" (178) and creating an extensive network. The Brotherhood, specifically, "did not call for revolution but rather for a process of Islamic reform in which Islamic values would inform political, economical, social, and educational spheres" (180). However, that is not to say that a revolutionary attitude did not exist. Indeed, Mubārak has moved to suppress the extremism which he perceives as a threat to the stability of the government. However, his actions have long been called into question for human rights violations, including torture and murder. Such behavior only encourages the growth of extremist groups and offers no solution to the present crises. The authors conclude, "Egypt continues to exist in a climate of socio-economic crisis and cultural alienation in which many experience the failure of the state and of secular ideologies" (191).

Voll and Esposito accomplish their task of presenting Islamic ideology and democracy within a broader, worldly context. This study, rather than using a reductionist approach to the examination of Islam, opened it up in a remarkably comprehensive context. Instead of exploring the commonalities within the religion, Voll and Esposito stress the sources of dissension between Sunni and Shī'ī, educated and illiterate, poor and elite. These differences reveal a greater tension that can be presupposed when one considers the newsworthy American criticism of Islam. Unfortunately, the book, rather than leaving the reader with an optimistic hope for the reconciliation of Islam and democracy, promotes a lack of confidence in Islamic politics. Undoubtedly Islamic politics cannot be considered within a Western context. However, the framework in which it must be considered is perhaps too idealistic for the present circumstances to allow. Islamic governments must create a system that permits a diversity of opinions and yet unifies on the critical points. This goal does not appear within reach. Too often, extremist groups will emerge and overtake any moderationist attempt. Minority groups can garner enough strength to implement their programs, or at the very least, create a visible tension. Since the issue of Islam by virtue of its nature affects a religious people with more impact than any other identifiable entity, it will constantly be the source of debate, a debate that can erupt into brutal violence.

As a sidenote, Voll and Esposito conspicuously mention the importance of university student participation in Islamic activism and resurgence throughout numerous countries. This identification is extremely important because it reflects a universal pattern. University students, in their personal struggle for identity, will often return to their roots. For example,

a young Muslim woman may begin to dress in complete attire even if her mother does not. Albeit a passive example, the fact is that such a response is not always the case. Consequently, in a religio-political sphere, the tendency of students is to revert back to fundamentalist extremes, if only temporarily. With unrestricted passion, university students exert a potential influence upon the nationstate that must not be overlooked. As the key to the cyclical nature of resurgence, students perpetuate a consistent pattern intrinsic to the understanding of Islamic revival.

The comprehensive history of the six Islamic countries under study and their various experiences with attempts to democratize sheds valuable insight into modern speculation. Voll and Esposito are analytical up to (but not beyond) the point where analysis can become confused with theory. The facts are clear, although the future for each country may not be. Although argument can be made for an Islamic democratic progression, argument can also be made for regression. Regardless, the reader leaves the book with an unbiased, cogent account of democracy as examined within a greater framework. An understanding is achieved which is a vital prerequisite to Islamic study. Succinctly, the authors allow those interested in Islam with little or no background in the subject to tackle it in a methodological manner. The reader finishes the book having gained a greater appreciation for, and comprehension of, the complexities of Islam.

Trinity College
Hartford, Connecticut

CARI SALISBURY



BOOK REVIEWS

The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia. Essays by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. EDITED BY MEHDI AMIN RAZAVI. Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996.

This book is a collection of essays on the Islamic intellectual tradition in Persia written by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the renowned Islamic thinker and scholar, over a period of forty years and which were published in various books and journals, some of which are no longer easily available. The editor, Mehdi Amin Razavi, a former student of Nasr, has brought together in a single volume these twenty-four essays, several of which were originally written in Persian and are now translated into English. The editor did so not only to make these essays more accessible, but also to present this collection as a major study of philosophical activities in Persia and of the contributions of Persian philosophers to the Islamic intellectual tradition generally and the philosophical tradition of *falsafa/hikma* specifically.

The book is divided into six parts: Part I: Islamic Thought and Persian Culture, Part II: Early Islamic Philosophy, Part III: Suhrawardī and the School of *Isḥraq*, Part IV: Philosophers-Poets-Scientists, Part V: Later Islamic Philosophy and Part VI: Islamic Thought in Modern Iran.

It is evident from the divisions of the book that these essays cover a long period of philosophical activities in Persia, extending from its inception to the present day. It also represents a major study of the various important aspects and dimensions of the Islamic intellectual tradition as it developed in Persia, as well as the thoughts and contributions of its outstanding thinkers and philosophers. In Part I, for example, the essays "Mysticism and Traditional Philosophy in Persia, Pre-Islamic and Islamic" and "The Significance of Persian Philosophical Works in the Tradition of Islamic Philosophy" are included and in Part VI an essay on "Islamic Philosophical Activities in Contemporary Persia: A Survey of Activity in the 50's and 60's" is found. There are also various essays dealing with the thoughts and contributions of Persian luminaries such as Ibn Sīnā, Bīrūnī, Suhrawardī, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, 'Umar Khayyām, Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and Mullā Ḥādī Sabziwārī. The works of these figures cover several important areas of Islamic thought, including natural philosophy, cosmology and cosmography, mathematics, epistemology, psychology and metaphysics.

The essays collected in this book provide the reader with a comprehensive survey and overview of the nature, history and phases of development of philosophical thought in Persia and the tremendous contribution of Persian philosophers to the various aspects of Islamic thought and learning. Since Persia was the intellectual and philosophical center of the Islamic world from the twelfth century onward, to know the history and development of Islamic thought and philosophy in Persia is also to gain an understanding and appreciation of the history of Islamic thought and philosophy itself, particularly post-Averroës Islamic philosophy.

Until rather recently, scholars of Islamic philosophy in the West believed that Islamic philosophy terminated with Ibn Rushd in the twelfth century. Nasr's study on the Islamic intellectual tradition in Persia, particularly essays contained in Parts III to VI, dispels this inaccurate view by disclosing to the reader the nature and development of Islamic philosophical thought from Suhrawardī onward. Suhrawardī's particular understanding of philosophy or *hikma* as a synthesis of discursive philosophy and intellectual illumination which is the result of spiritual purification, marks a turning point in the history of Islamic philosophy. From Suhrawardī onward, philosophers emphasized and relied on the immediate and illuminative knowledge of Islamic revealed principles and doctrines rather than on rational and speculative philosophical principles only.

The essays on Afḡal al-Dīn Kāshānī, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī and Raṣhīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh in Part IV are especially important in providing invaluable information on the revival of intellectual and philosophical activities in thirteenth century Persia. It is a period which is greatly neglected in the history of Islamic thought but which is particularly significant for the later intellectual history of Islam. According to Nasr, the thirteenth century witnessed the re-

vival of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy, the elaboration of Suhrawardī's *ishrāqī* doctrines and the more systematic expressions of Sufi metaphysics and also the beginning of a rapprochement between the different schools of thought. There were many thinkers between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries who were interested in synthesizing the perspectives and principles of the different school of thought and their works laid the foundation for the grand synthesis of Mullā Ṣadrā, the seventeenth century Safavid *hakīm*. Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical works are often regarded as a remarkable synthesis of *mashshā'ī* (peripatetic) and *ishrāqī* (illuminationist) philosophy, *kalām* (theology) and *ʿirfān* (gnosis).

Nasr's essays, first published in the 1960s and 1970s, are among the earliest comprehensive and authoritative discussions of post Ibn Rushd Islamic philosophy available in the English language. Thus, they help to fill in the lacuna in literature available in the West on the structure, history and development of post-Averroës Islamic philosophy.

The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia demonstrates Nasr's profound and extensive knowledge of the Islamic intellectual tradition and his exceptional scholarship which is the result of a rare combination of a traditional Islamic intellectual training and a Western education. It is also a witness to his tremendous contribution to studies on the structure, history and development of Islamic thought and philosophy which is of great importance and value to scholars and students of Islamic thought and philosophy both in the West and in the Muslim world.

*University Science of Malaysia
Penang, Malaysia*

ZAILAN MORIS



Sufism, Mystics and Saints in Modern Egypt. By VALERIE J. HOFFMAN. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995.

In the author's words, this book "aims to be a fairly comprehensive description of sufism in Egypt today." As such, the author has provided very useful information about the origins and the main personalities of twentieth century Egyptian Sufism. The book does not offer original insights nor a very profound analysis of the topic at hand. The reader gets away with the feeling that the author is indebted in her main conceptual formulations to several authorities on modern Egyptian Sufism: Michael Gilsenan, Tawfiq al-Ṭawīl, Frederick de Jong, and the late Abū al-Wafā al-Taftazānī. Her conclusions were long debated by these scholars.

Although one may easily trace Islamic spirituality to its Qur'anic origins, Sufism, as a spiritual and socio-religious phenomenon, emerged against the background of Islamic expansion, both military and intellectual, in the formative phase of early Islam. Sufism became a systematic Islamic science and a method of training when its great manuals were composed in the fourth and fifth centuries of the Islamic calendar. Besides establishing itself as a traditional Islamic science, Sufism was very instrumental in the spread of Islam in Africa, Asia, and South East Asia. As such the subject of Sufism is interesting for its complexity and centrality throughout Islamic history. And hence the difficulty in treating such a diverse topic.

Serious studies on the impact of Sufism on modern Islamic history and thought, roughly from the fifteenth century on, are rare, and the few studies we have are often confined to the study of one major Sufi Shaykh or *ṭarīqa* or a spiritual trend. One may agree with the implicit contention of the author that Sufism has left its deep and indelible mark on Muslim civilization and culture, a conclusion entertained by Hamilton Gibb over half a century ago, but, for instance, we lack scientific studies on the great help Sufi brotherhoods may have granted the Ottoman army in its expansion or the moral and social roles played by mysticism in the so-called Muslim age of decline. I think that the history of the Sufi interaction with modern Muslim history is yet to be written in a systematic and general way. And this must be a team effort, especially in view of the fact the material relevant to such work is available.

In the first chapter, the author deals with Sufism in an age of social and political change. She contends that "Sufism did not engineer a concerted response to the challenges of social change and Western modernist intellectualism" (p. 7). In other words, Sufism, as a discipline and an organized social and charitable association and movement, has failed, to the author's mind, in comprehending the basic tenets of modernity and adapting its world view to the challenges of the modern world. The pioneers of nineteenth century Islamic reform movements, such as Ṭaḥṭāwī, 'Attār, 'Abduh, and Afghānī, aimed at revitalizing the religious and scientific bases of Muslim society by coming to grips with the challenges the modernist project posed to the Islamic heritage. Some of these Muslim reformers, as the author shows, although of Sufi background, were critical of the superstitious and non-rational aspects of Sufi thought and behavior. But Islamic reform, although attacking some Sufi practices, did not attempt to refute the intellectual and religious bases of Sufism, in the same way that the Wahhābī movement of Arabia did.

The question of the relationship between Sufism and the Ikhwān in Egypt proves to be often fascinating. As a socio-religious and political movement emerging in the interwar period and in direct response to British hegemony, the Ikhwān posed an organizational and intellectual threat to Sufism. There are some people who argue, and the author is amongst them, that both the Ikhwān and Sufism have been on an intellectual collision course since the emergence of the former in 1928. This is somewhat of an unpolished conclusion in view of the main fact that the founder of the Ikhwān, Ḥasan al-Bannā, is noted for his Sufi upbringing and for his modeling the Ikhwān movement after Sufi thought and organization. That the Sufi world view permeates the Ikhwān's is founded on the basic premise of the master or guide (supreme guide in Ikhwān's terminology) as the main authority in all matters. Other significant Ikhwān leaders did not deviate from the Sufi ideas and practices of Ḥasan al-Bannā. Such people as Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, Saīd Ḥawwa, and even Muḥammad Quṭb, the brother of the late Sayyid Quṭb, hold Sufism in great esteem.

The author argues that Sufism, unlike the modern nation-state in the Middle East, has not been an agent of modernization. She writes, "Sufism is marginal to the modernization process and has little impact on the political and intellectual life of the nation" (p. 16). I think that the central question here revolves around the moral and ethical basis of society. Has Egyptian society, under the impact of modernization, suffered a great shift in its religious values? Many Muslim intellectuals, belonging to different backgrounds—Sufis, Ikhwān, 'Ulamā'—argue that although the Muslim ethos is highly entrenched in Egyptian society, the increasing gap between rich and poor, the concentration of power in a few hands (that is, the military), and the reliance on Western notions and systems of material and intellectual progress, have all introduced new forms of 'ethical behavior' into Egyptian society, many of which are alien to the egalitarian and humanistic principles of Islam. Sufi intellectuals, much more than any segment of society, are cognizant of these deep changes and influences, and, one could argue, they never disregarded their traditional role of trying to improve the moral status of society. As the author notes, great Sufi masters always trace their moral and religious formation to the impact of the Qur'an and the Prophet, and they often try to embody the ethical standards of both in their contemporary life.

In addition to these spiritual foundations, modern-day Sufis trace their lineage to a chain of saints who, in turn, are thought to have drunk from the fountain of prophetic spirituality. Both dead and living saints help maintain the spiritual life of people alive, and their intercession on behalf of especially the poor is but a commentary on social conditions and how deep economic, political, and social changes affect the poor and marginalized.

It is because of its deeply entrenched spiritual background, and its ethical principles and moral behavior, that Sufism is likely to remain a powerful force in Egyptian and Muslim societies, a conclusion that the author is uncertain of on page 358. Take, for example, two significant and modern spiritual movements in the Muslim world: the Tabligh Jāmā'at of the Subcontinent of India and Dār al-Arqam movement in Malaysia and Indonesia. These movements are an example of spiritual renewal and reawakening in contemporary Islam. Both emerged in direct response to the increasing materialization of society by stressing the spiritual aspect, and as a result they have gained millions of adherents all over the world.

It is quite naive to assume that both Sufism and fundamentalism are anti-modern, since in their approach to the modern world they recognize modernity's complexity and the challenges

it poses to the spiritual and religious foundations of Islam. The issue is not about the compatibility or incompatibility of Sufism (or fundamentalism) and the modern age; it goes deeper than that. It is about the relevance of religion in modern society in general and the Sufi position in the modern world in particular.

The preceding begs the question of the social background of modern Sufism in Egyptian society, treated by the author in several chapters. Although many of the Sufi *ṭarīqas* attracted the poor to their ranks, there are some *ṭarīqas* that attracted the elite, such as the Shadhiliyyah movement that originated in North Africa in the thirteenth century and spread to different parts of the Muslim world ever since. One may argue that, although Sufism is based on asceticism and withdrawal from the world, it did not end up a monastic phenomenon, like what happened in Catholic Christianity. Sufism has always valued social intercourse and aimed at reforming the moral bases of Muslim society. It is the view of many great Sufi masters, such as al-Tustari, al-Muḥāsibī, al-Sarrāj and al-Ḥāfi, that it is possible to achieve self-annihilation and even spiritual fulfillment through poverty and renunciation of this world through society.

The author offers some useful information about the post-1967 status of Egyptian Sufism. The 1967 defeat provided the Ikhwān with ample opportunity to reintroduce their intellectual and religious claims, especially in the context of the defeat of Nasserism and the rise of the Sādāt regime. Sādāt encouraged the spread of certain Sufi orders as well the spread of Ikhwān as a means of de-Nasserizing Egypt. How much was Sādāt successful in his efforts is hard to say. We know that he was assassinated by an offshoot of the Ikhwān who disliked his policy.

To conclude, although the author does not delve into complex theoretical matters in relation to Sufism, I have found this book to be useful in shedding some light on the social position of Sufism in modern Egyptian society and the relevance of Islamic spirituality in the age of modernism. The author's personal style has helped to clarify some important issues especially as they are encountered by a Western woman doing field research on Sufism. It would have been more useful, however, to sharpen some arguments by focusing on some current issues without delving in the remote past.

*Hartford Seminary
Hartford, Connecticut*

IBRAHIM M. ABU-RABĀ'



SHORTER NOTICES

Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression. By FARID ESACK. Oxford: One World, 1997. Pp. 288. Index.

The author of this book is a well-known Muslim activist and thinker who was jailed by the Apartheid government because of his fight against injustice and his commitment to a pluralistic and democratic South Africa. The major aim of the book is to establish that the Qur'an rests on a vision that is both liberationist and pluralistic in nature. To support this claim, Esack offers a well-thought out hermeneutical methodology that spells out basic Qur'anic concepts by making them relevant to the social and political situation in contemporary South Africa.

The author succeeds in presenting a creative vision of both Islam and Muslim identity that can best be affirmed by fighting injustice and transforming an unjust situation to a just one. Such a struggle, moreover, may be fulfilled by rereading the text in a new and creative way, and by presenting Islamic systematic theology that is in solidarity with the oppressed of religious and ethnic backgrounds. This book establishes Esack as one of the few liberation theologians in contemporary Islam.



Taqrīr al-ḥāl al-dīniyyah fi miṣr [The State of Religion in Egypt Report]. EDITED BY NABIL ABDEL-FATTAH. Cairo: Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, 1996. Pp. 390.

This is the most comprehensive and useful work on the state of religion in contemporary Egypt. This report, updated annually since it first came out five years ago, covers both Muslim and Christian institutions in Egypt, their various creeds, political and social histories, and current manifestations in Egyptian society. The first section of the report covers such official religious institutions as Azhar University, the Ministry of the Religious Endowments, Dār al-Ifṭā' or the Religious Rulings House, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Church, and the monastic (Christian) orders. The second section covers the unofficial religious movements such as the Ikhwān, the radical Islamist groups, and Islamists abroad and migrant Copts. The third section covers civil and voluntary associations, both Muslim and Christian. And the fourth and the last section covers the interactions of all the above with Egyptian politics and civil society.

One may mention that this ambitious work, which is first-rate scholarship, is being carried out by a team of fourteen Egyptian researchers who hail from different disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences.



Culture et idéologie dans le monde arabe. Preface par Sami Amin. By FAHIMA CHARAFFEDDINE. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994. Pp. 244.

Since the publication of Albert Hourani's classic, *Arab Thought in the Liberal Age*, in the early 1960s, the reader has been awaiting further studies in the field of contemporary Arab thought. Charafeddine's deals with post-1967 Arab intellectual history and trends and covers a lacuna in our knowledge about the various trends of thought. However, she is not as insightful as Hourani in her analysis. Charaffeddine divides her work into two main parts: the first deals with the modernist current (*Le courant moderniste*), which includes, among others, the liberals, the nationalists, and the Marxists. The second part deals with the traditionalist current (*Le courant traditionaliste*), and covers both the different Islamic tendencies and what the author terms the 'synthetic trend' (*Les courants composés*), best represented by the Moroccan thinker, Muhammad 'Abid al-Jābirī and the Egyptian thinker Ḥassan Ḥanaflī.



L'Occident dans l'imaginaire arabo-musulman. BY NOUREDDINE AFAYA Casablanca: Les Editions Toubkal, 1997. Pp. 139.

"The question of the West has occupied the Arab consciousness since the Crusades," states the author. The West has acquired various meanings in Arab and Muslim thought, especially since the 19th century. This book offers a comprehensive analysis of the leading Arab intellectual trends of the 20th century on the problematic of the West. The first section analyzes the Arab liberal position on the West as seen through the lenses of Tāhā Ḥussayn, while the second analyzes in detail the Islamist position on the West, especially as it is represented by such figures as Ḥasan al-Bannā, Sayyid Qutb, Rashīd al-Ghannouchi, and Muḥammad al-Ghazālī. In the last section, the author elaborates on his own theses of the West and argues that neither the West nor the East is an absolute and unchangeable entity. He goes on to argue that the United States has become the most manifest intellectual and technological power in the Arab world and that it has entered this world through two main doors: 1) the door of neocolonialism, as heir to both France and England, and 2) the door of liberalism and democracy, as a country advocating a new set of ideas from the new world. In both, the United States poses a challenge to the contemporary Arab consciousness. The author advocates a better Arab understanding and appreciation, not just of the West generally, but of the United States in particular.



L'Islam est-il hostile à la laïcité? BY ABDOU FILALI-ANSARY. Casablanca. Editions Le Fennec, 1997. Pp. 157.

Since the publication in 1926 of 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāzīq's *al-Islām wa usūl al-hukm (Islam and the Principles of Government)*, Muslim scholars and intellectuals have debated the compatibility of Islam and secularism and Islam and modernity. Filali-Ansary, editor of the Moroccan quarterly, *Prologue Revue Maghrébine du Livre* and the translator of 'Abd al-Rāzīq's already mentioned book, delves into this important topic and argues that Islam is open to cultural and intellectual borrowing from the West and that modernity or secularism and Islam are essentially compatible. Faced with all sorts of political and intellectual challenge, the Muslim world must deal with its own identity through the lenses of its complex tradition, its present manifestations, and its openness to outside influences.

In the course of his analysis, the author identifies three basic Muslim positions on secularism: 1) Islam does not need secularism; 2) Islam is hostile to secularism, and 3) Islam and secularism are compatible. The first position is taken by both Ḥasan Ḥanafī and Muḥammad 'Abid al-Jābirī; the second is best represented by Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, and the third is represented by such scholars as Muḥammad Arkoun, Naṣr Ḥamīd Abū Zayd, and 'Abdallāh Laroui.



Islamisme, modernisme, libéralisme. BY ABDALLAH LAROUÏ Casablanca: Centre Culturel Arabe, 1997.

The intellectual breadth of Abdallah Laroui and the significant transformations his thought has gone through reflect the anguish and concern of a great number of Leftist and nationalist intellectuals in North Africa. Laroui's generation was deeply affected, although not humiliated, by French colonialism. It was a generation that aimed at building the intellectual foundations of a young, independent, and nationalist state. It was a generation that was still intellectually indebted to European thought, especially to Marxism, Liberalism, Hegelianism. It was a generation that could not escape the problematic of the other.

Although born of a deep reflection on the Moroccan cultural and social situation, Laroui attempts to tackle those conditions and concepts that summarize the movement of modern and contemporary Arab thought. Laroui's intellectual enterprise and the great attraction it gained

amongst a small but influential segment of Arab intelligentsia summarize the cultural movement of Arab society since the end of official colonialism. His theoretical reflection on social, economic, political and cultural conditions in the Arab world is tangible in the works of such people as Elias Murqus, M. Amin al-Ālim, Nabil 'Abd al-Fattāh, Hishām Sharabi, Hichem Djait, Muḥammad 'Abid al-Jābirī, and others. In brief, Laroui's thought has influenced a number of Moroccan as well as non-Moroccan Arab thinkers.

A deep reading of Laroui's work furnishes the reader with a number of questions about his writing style that is described by a leading Moroccan intellectual as an essay within an essay. Although he poses more questions than he answers, Laroui is fully able to grasp the pulse of the cultural and intellectual movement in the contemporary Arab world. But he does that not merely as an objective and analytical academician and critic. He brings to mind the image of the dialectical ideologue, a person who is anxious to radically transform the situation and dismantle forever the intellectual paradigms that have been dominant in the Arab world for long. He engages the reader and sometimes in a bitter way. He forces you to take a position right away. The force of his arguments is clear in his major work, especially in *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine* and in *La crise des intellectuels arabes*. Laroui's real strength appears in cultural and philosophical analysis and not so much in political analysis. His real goal seems the political transformation of the Arab world, whereas his pronounced goal is to subject the cultural milieu of the Arab world to a rigorous criticism.

Laroui's reflection on the modern Arab world is born of his particular situation as a Moroccan thinker. However, modern Arab thought is the product of '*La problématique arabe*,' which he defines as follows: authenticity, continuity (with the past), universality, and expression. Authenticity refers to the definition of the self, the collective self that, by nature, implies a negation, the West as negation. One must understand the history of modern Arab self against the background of the modern West, its interventions in the Arab world, and the Arab reactions to the challenge of the West. Further, authenticity implies a certain continuity with the past, the complex Arabo-Islamic heritage, a past that Laroui condemns because of its anti-reason. Universality is a method that permits modern Arabs to act and think in a rational way. This transitory situation of the Arab world has allowed a certain literary and cultural expression, an expression that reflects the deep anguish of the contemporary Arab soul.

These various notions enable us to understand the central cultural problems of the contemporary Arab world only if they are understood in larger contexts, those of religion and history, religion and society, Islam and the West, the Arab world and the West, imperialism and the nationstate, the intelligentsia and the modern Arab state, etc.

Laroui defines three basic intellectual trends, each represented by a major figure, that summarize the progress of modern Arab thought: 1) religious trend represented by the religious intellectual (*Le clerc*); 2) political trend, represented by the liberal intellectual, and 3) scientific rational trend represented by the technocrats and men of science. The first trend is situated in religious faith, the second in political modernization, and the third in scientific and technical activity and product. Each trend is made up of several strata, of a complex structure, of many voices and dimensions.

The religious mind, be it Wahhābī, Shī'ī or Sunni, does not see the progress of science and thought in the West to be a product of a wedding between the western civilization and Christianity, but a divorce between them. Christianity means ethics and meaning, and civilization means accumulation of wealth and loss of meaning. Needless to say, the above book is a culmination of these important debates.



Introduction à la critique de la raison arabe. By MOHAMMED ABED al-Jabiri. Casablanca: Editions Le Fennec, 1996.

This important book is a partial translation of al-Jābirī's original *al-Khiṭāb al-ʿarabī al-muʿāṣir*, appearing in Beirut in 1982. Professor of Philosophy at Muhammad V University in Rabat since

1966 and a key figure in the Arab nationalist movement, al-Jābirī has contributed immensely to the revival of the contemporary Arab debate on the relevance of the Islamic intellectual and religious tradition to the contemporary world. Besides writing major works on the deconstruction and formation of the 'Arab and Muslim mind,' al-Jābirī has been lately concerned about such issues as globalization, the relevance of the nationalist project in the Arab world, the Islamist-nationalist debate, and the meaning of the Arab culture in the age of globalization. To achieve cultural and intellectual independence from the West, al-Jābirī has advocated the use of Arabic in North Africa.



Muslims and Christians: Face to Face. BY KATE ZEBIRI. Oxford: One World, 1997.

Professor Zebiri of the School of oriental and African Studies at the University of London writes a much-needed book on Christian-Muslim relations as seen by a number of modern and contemporary Muslim and Christian thinkers and theologians. She divides her book into five chapters, each of which deals with a particular topic. In the first chapter (Factors Influencing Muslim-Christian Relations), she discusses Christian-Muslim relations against the background of the Qur'anic material on the "People of the Book," the historical legacy of both Christians and Muslims and modern imperialism and mission in the Muslim world. The second chapter deals with popular Muslim literature on Christianity. This chapter is useful in that it critiques the lack of Muslim understanding of both the Old Testament and the New Testament and both the Jewish and Christian scholarship surrounding them. Chapter three deals with Protestant missionary literature on Islam. The early missionary writers, such as Zwemer and Tisdal, sought to disparage Islam by maintaining its incompatibility with Christians; some of the contemporary missionary authors see some affinity between the Islamic doctrine and the Christian one. The fourth chapter deals with the study of Christianity by Muslim intellectuals who reside in the West or who may have received Western training, such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hasan Askari, the late Ismail al-Faruqi. It is unfortunate that no Muslim scholars who reside in the Muslim world are ever referred to. The last chapter provides useful insights into the academic study of Islam by Western Islamicists and theologians. In this chapter, as well as throughout her book, Zebiri does not buy into the main arguments of Edward Said on orientalism.



Juifs et musulmans au Maroc: 1859-1948. BY MOHAMMED KENBIB. Rabat: Universite Mohammed V, 1994. Pp. 747. Index.

After eight years of research and writing, Professor Kenbib of Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco, has succeeded brilliantly in writing the social and religious history of the Jewish community in Morocco from the second half of the 19th century to 1948. This exhaustive study analyzes in depth the following dimensions in Jewish-Muslims relations in modern Morocco: Jewish-Muslim coexistence in pre-19th century Morocco and the expulsion of both Muslims and Jews from Spain before the 16th century; the heterogeneous composition of the Jewish community, both Toshavim and Meghorashim; Jewish-Muslim relations in North Morocco around the Spanish-Moroccan war of 1859-1860; Jewish-Muslim intercommunal tensions on the eve of the French Protectorate of 1912; Jewish-Muslim relations under the French Protectorate, the emergence of Zionist organizations in Morocco between 1917 and 1929. In the last chapter, the author analyzes the relationship between three political trends in Moroccan society in the 1930s: nationalism, assimilation, and Zionism. These three trends, present deeply amongst the various Jewish communities, became the more important with the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948 and the subsequent establishment of the state of Israel, to which many, but not all, Moroccan Jews migrated.



Islam and Human Ideology. By SAMIH A. EL-ZEIN. TRANSLATED BY ELSAYED M. H. OMRAN. London: Kegan Paul International, 1996. Pp. 375.

This is a fine rendering of a book on Islamic social and economic thought by the well-known Lebanese Islamist, Samih A. El-Zein. Following in the footsteps of such modern Arab Islamists as Muhammad al-Ghazālī, Sayyid Quṭb, and Muhammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, El-Zein analyzes the economic and social systems of both capitalism and socialism and finds them wanting. He proposes an Islamic economic system that is based on egalitarianism. This work is somewhat idealistic since the author does not relate his analysis to the contemporary economic or social conditions in the Muslim world.

Hartford Seminary
Hartford, Connecticut

IBRAHIM M. ABU-RABĀ'



INTRODUCTION

The articles published in this issue do not need to be "introduced" by summaries; even the best abstracts would grossly fail to do justice to each of these contributions. The only purpose of this introduction is to draw attention to several topics that are raised by two or more authors and that are regularly recurring themes in the discussion on Christian-Muslim relations.

Of far-reaching consequences is the point discussed explicitly by Dr. Nasr and mentioned succinctly, almost in passing, by Dr. Steenbrink in his remark that serious (Indonesian) Muslims have "a great problem finding their way in the jungle of contemporary Christianity." Following his observations on the impact of modernism on present-day Christianity, Dr. Nasr discusses at some length the reactions of Muslims who are "at a loss to explain why every few decades the very bases of Christian theology seem to undergo major changes if not in all circles at least in the 'liberal' strands of Christianity." These changes may even be more radical and fundamental than many imagine, and some of them originate from authors who otherwise would not be considered to belong to the 'liberal' camp. A few illustrations suffice. The first ones concern the Christian notion of salvation, brought up more than once in this issue. Dr. Nasr writes about the difficulty for Christians "to extend the possibility of salvation beyond the redemption offered by Christ," and about the—for Muslims clearly totally unacceptable—Christian construct to extend the notion of saving grace to Muslims by considering them "as 'Christians' without knowing it." Dr. Abu-Rabi' also mentions the *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* pronouncement and one of his points of criticism with regard to the teachings of Pope John Paul II concerns this same issue.

No matter how justifiable many of the objections are that have been brought forward against the well-known categorization of Christian perspectives on other religions under the headings: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism,¹ in this context I may be allowed to simply state that at least the views of those often referred to as 'pluralists' definitely move beyond what they see as an illegitimate narrowing of Christian thinking

¹ In this issue Dr. Burrell writes about this "singularly unilluminating scheme." The use of this tripartite division, some of its major critics, and a few other points raised in this section of the introduction are discussed more fully in my "Theology of Religions: A Review of Developments, Trends and Issues," in Roland Miller, ed. *Christian-Muslim Dialogue* (Geneva: L.W.F., 1998), 45-100.

about God's saving grace at work in this world and in this world's religious traditions. From among those whom some would classify as "inclusivists," a remarkably new answer to the question: "Who is saved?" is given by David Watson who argues that "salvation is in fact a birthright by virtue of our humanity" ("accomplished for . . . [all] already by Jesus Christ"), and who sees the call to discipleship, and not an exclusive privilege of salvation, as the distinctive dimension of the Christian message.² Of special interest also for the Muslim-Christian dialogue is the corrective voiced by many Christians of very different theological persuasions as to what the Biblical notion of salvation entails. In an article of 1989 Lesslie Newbigin criticized sharply "the notion that the only question at stake [in the discussion on salvation] is the question of the fate of the individual soul in the next world":

This individualism, with its center in the selfish concern of the individual about personal salvation, is utterly remote from the Biblical view, which has at its center God and divine rule. The central question is not: "How shall I be saved?" but "How shall I glorify God by understanding, loving, and doing God's will—here and now in this earthly life?"³

As a final example of an extremely radical and, not surprisingly, very controversial "restating" of Christian doctrine I mention a recent study in which the professor of New Testament at the Theological University of Kampen, The Netherlands, defends the thesis that the traditional Christian doctrine of reconciliation / atonement can not be founded on the witness of the New Testament. The title of his last chapter: "An 'Exemplary' Life," summarizes his understanding of Jesus ("the embodiment of God's love and faithfulness") and the first section of this concluding chapter reiterates his main thesis in the few words of the subtitle: "No Doctrine of Reconciliation."⁴ In his final reflections, the author acknowledges that his concern for all those who can not 'find' themselves any longer in the wordings of old confessions and dogmas is one of the factors that led him on the road he is traveling. There is no doubt that the discussion will continue, and probably even intensify: Are we dealing here, as some would say, with an irresponsible succumbing to the *Zeitgeist* or is this, as others would have it, a truly 'faithful' response to the situation in which God has placed us?

² David L. Watson, *God Does Not Foreclose The Universal Promise of Salvation* (Nashville. Abingdon, 1990), 92-93, 114.

³ Lesslie Newbigin, "Religious Pluralism and the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 13 (1989): 54.

⁴ C. J. den Heyer, *Verzoening Bijbelse notities bij een omstreden thema* [Reconciliation. Biblical annotations on a controversial theme] (Kampen: Kok, 1997 and several reprints)

An entirely different set of questions circles around the inter-related issues of religion and political power, and the understanding of the place of the *shari'a*, partly in contrast with Christian perspectives on the law. One of the points raised in this connection in many discussions—twice explicitly in the contributions that follow—is that of striking differences in the life stories and the work of Jesus and Muḥammad. Can these differences be seen not as irreconcilable contrasts, but as complementary perspectives? Both Dr. Nasr and Dr. Cragg affirm this in their own way. The first one writes that “the figures of both Christ and the Prophet, one of whom refrained from all matters of this world and the other immersed himself in it in order to transform it, were divine possibilities that had to be realized.” In the opening paragraph of a section in which he discusses the meaning of the Hijra, Dr. Cragg remarks, anticipating his conclusion: “If, in some measure, we have need of a faith born in Gethsemane, we may also salute a faith characterized in Hijra.” The author refers to the “endless debate about the Prophet’s Hijra from Mecca to Medina” and the negative interpretations of that move by “some” outside Islam. He then proceeds to read it in another way, recognizes that the Hijra “signals that power is an inescapable dimension,” and ponders: “Perhaps it is the vocation of Islam among the religions to represent the indispensability of the power dimension in human affairs and in the will, however precarious, to subdue those affairs to the authority which is God’s alone.” Rather than using the terminology of complementing perspectives, Dr. Cragg speaks about what he sees as the need that this truth of Islam (“its Hijra into Medinan politicization”) be “balanced by another truth, a truth that Christianity has at the heart of its Gethsemane.”

Several studies are available that deal with some aspect of the important topic of Muslims’ and Christians’ use of each other’s Scripture. In this issue Dr. Mark Swanson draws attention to the variety of “Approaches to the Qurʾān in Some Early Arabic Christian Apologies.” Since there are still too many people who act as if Muslim-Christian “dialogue” started in this century, it is good to be reminded again and again of the important and not always negatively-controversial contacts that have existed for centuries in various parts of the world. As far as Arabic literature is concerned, Dr. Swanson’s conclusion with regard to the Christian segment of it would seem equally true, *mutatis mutandis*, for its Muslim counterpart: “In its use of the Qurʾān, the earliest Arabic Christian literature pointed the way beyond prooftexting—surely one of this literature’s many gifts to contemporary Christian-Muslim dialogue.” Dr. Fathi Osman’s frequent and affirmative usage of Biblical texts, in his article on “Monotheists and the ‘Other’,” provides a clear contemporary example of a non-controversial use of the “others” Scripture.

The way in which the academic study of Islam is pursued by Christians and that of Christianity by Muslims has, obviously, an immediate impact on Christian-Muslim relations. Dr. Mahmoud Ayoub and Dr. David Burrell deal in their contributions with two scholars whose approaches to Islam were utterly different. Rudolf Otto held, in the words of Dr. Ayoub, "a romantic interest in the Aryan cultures and religions of India and Iran, combined with a critical disdain towards Islam as a Semitic religion." He never came close to understanding Islam at least to some extent "from within." Louis Massignon's "epistemological alternative," as Dr. Burrell puts it, "did not presume a detached 'objectivity' but rather demanded some form of participation in a mode of understanding more akin to faith than to knowledge, as generally understood."

The words "some form of participation" offer a natural transition to a few notes on dialogue. Several of the contributors to this issue remark on this topic. There is, by now, a broad agreement on the necessity of dialogue and on many of its objectives. Notwithstanding serious disappointments in the lack of significant progress in some areas, one can safely say that in general our relationships have improved significantly. "Habits of bigotry and suspicion have been overcome in circles where intelligent reverence is prized and the great complexities are recognized," observes Dr. Cragg. "True eirenicism," he stresses, also allows for a frank discussion ("not harshly or in cantankerous terms") of fundamental contrasts that exist: and that—a point already touched upon above—may well be seen as 'balancing' each other: "May be religions need each other precisely because of those contrasts by which they separately endure. These, however, are not in place as long as they are left to silence." Dr. Nasr, who at the beginning of his article observes that "during the past half century Islamic-Christian dialogue has turned from a rivulet into a roaring river," also points to the necessity to move "beyond political niceties and diplomatic decorum. Problems must first be stated in honesty before they can be solved."

Many other dimensions of the dialogue adventure also need ongoing attention. One of the very obvious ones is that a dialogue always takes place *in loco*, in concrete situations, local, regional and national. Dr. Steenbrink's article in a sense underlines that point. The *Pancasila* context creates a unique setting for interfaith relations in Indonesia, but beyond that, the dialogue agenda for East Timor is clearly different from that for Yogyakarta, even though some of the same basic theological issues are bound to come up in both instances. That human rights and other ethical questions occupy a prominent place on many dialogue agendas in our time is not surprising.⁵ At conferences of this kind there is undoubt-

⁵ Dr. Osman refers to the Helsinki, Vienna and Beijing conferences. In the publication of

edly place for presentations *about* various religious perspectives on these points, but there is also the critical issue of the selection of persons to speak *for* Christianity, Islam or any other religion, since this choice will to a large degree determine the impact these conferences will have in the various communities of faith. And then there is the 'personal' dimension: the prerequisites for a meaningful involvement in dialogue, beyond the oft repeated—but never simply to be assumed—requirement of not only a willingness, but a real *ability* to listen and to share. "Dialogue must engage the whole person, so that friendship will always remain an indispensable element" (Dr. Burrell). Ever since one of the first dialogue conferences, Sri Lanka 1967, "living in dialogue" has remained an essential aspect of what dialogue means. Many controversial questions with regard to dialogue remain. Perhaps the most important one is whether in-depth conversations between people of different religious traditions can lead us not just to a fuller understanding of the faith of 'others' and to a deeper awareness of what is distinctive in our own faith, but whether it can also lead to a rethinking and restating of our own theological affirmations. That pleas in this direction are often received with nervous skepticism or vehemently rejected is fully understandable. But those voices are being heard by many, and they need to be answered.

The obstacles that we face are not to be taken lightly, Dr. Nasr and others remind us. Dr. Osman entitled his final section; "The Bitter Reality." And Dr. Steenbrink ends his article with the open (as I understand it: *truly open*) question whether we are moving even in Indonesia in the direction of a possible setback in Muslim-Christian relations. But throughout this issue problems are raised and obstacles mentioned because all share the conviction that they need to be pondered *and overcome*.

Reading, Vermont

WILLEM A. BIJLEFELD
guest editor



the papers and proceedings of the Hong Kong conference *Dialogue of Religions on Human Rights* (Hong Kong Asian Human Rights Commission, 1996), only one paper deals explicitly with the Islamic side, Charles Amjad-Ali, "Text and Interpretation Superfluity on Issues of Human Rights in Islam," 65-80, a first draft of this paper had been presented at the Christian-Muslim Consultation on Religion and Human Rights, Berlin, November 1994

ISLAMIC-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE – PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES TO BE PONDERED AND OVERCOME

Introduction

During the past half century Islamic-Christian dialogue has turned from a rivulet into a roaring river, from an occasional conference to numerous meetings, oral and written exchanges and round table discussions taking place year around in nearly every corner of the globe from Australia and Malaysia to the Arab world, from Europe to America and Canada. During this period much of both a scholarly and a theological nature has been written and debated including numerous studies of historical encounters between the two religions and even journals are now being published devoted solely to this subject. Likewise, basic theological and ethical issues have been discussed and as a result a more favorable climate of discourse has been created in many circles within both religious communities. One can cite the regular meetings organized by the Vatican and the World Council of Churches with various Islamic bodies in both the West and the Islamic world. Then there are the Selly Oaks colleges in Birmingham in England devoted to Muslim-Christian understanding as there are the centers at Hartford and Georgetown in America and at Balamand University in Lebanon devoted to the same goal.

From the Islamic side regular conferences on this subject have been instigated and organized in Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Iran and many other Muslim lands, while some of the leading Muslim authorities and organizations—both Sunni and Shīʿite—have been at the forefront of the movement for better understanding between Islam and Christianity including its Orthodox form. There has also been some harmony on the plane of action as far as common ethical interests are concerned as can be seen in the 1994 United Nations conference on the family in Cairo. While some of these meetings have been carried out for the sake of political expediency for one or both sides of the dialogue, many substantive spiritual, theological, philosophical and ethical issues have also been discussed beyond immediate political interests and some agreements reached at least among those participating in such activities.

While there is no doubt that among proponents of genuine dialogue there is now a better understanding of basic issues and even laudable proposals for the solution of certain contentious ones, there are still many problems and obstacles on the path of a genuine dialogue which would create mutual understanding and respect and recognition of each religion

by the other as a divinely ordained path for salvation in the strictly religious sense of the term. In this essay our goal is to deal with some of these basic problems and obstacles rather than the issues which have already been "resolved" at least to an appreciable extent and in a manner that is satisfactory to the mainstream if not to all sectors of each community. We shall deal with these outstanding problems and obstacles under the four categories of theological issues,¹ freedom of worship, missionary activity, and attitudes toward modernism and secularism.

Theological Issues

Despite all these decades of dialogue, the central issue of the acceptance by Christianity and Islam of each other as veritable revelations, without destroying the traditional meaning of revelation (the *way* of the Islamic tradition) has not been totally settled. Granted that it is easier for Islam to accept Christianity as an authentic message from Heaven than vice-versa, difficulties remain on both sides although in this particular issue Christians have a higher hurdle to surmount than do Muslims. A number of Christian theologians such as John Hick among Protestants and Hans Küng among Catholics have stepped forward as theologians to face this problem squarely, but most of the influential Christian theologians, even among Catholics and Protestants wishing to carrying out serious religious dialogue with Muslims, find it difficult to go beyond the literal meaning of "I am the way, the life, and the truth" and *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Many try to stretch the meaning of such sayings, including believing that Christ's grace can include Muslims in its embrace, without however accepting the Qur'anic revelation as such as a revelation from God.

In general a great deal of polite diplomacy seeks to veil authentic theological issues among which the question of the incarnation and the Trinity loom as being formidable in any Muslim-Christian debate. Here most Muslim thinkers, while accepting the Qur'anic dictum about the divine origin of Christianity, attribute these central Christian doctrines to misinterpretations of Christ's message and the alteration (*tahrif*) of the text of the New Testament and do not distinguish between the trinity (*tathlith*) strongly opposed by the Qur'ān and the orthodox Christian understanding which does not in any way neglect the unity of God although, needless to say, the emphasis on unity is different in the two religions and a "unitarian" interpretation of the Trinity as demanded by the Islamic perspective can only be carried out on the esoteric level.

¹ In a sense of course all the issues discussed in this essay are theological, but in this context by theological issues we mean those dealing with theology in the more strict sense of the term.

From the Christian side, however, few attempts are being made to interpret these doctrines metaphysically and esoterically and even in the more traditional circles where these doctrines are still fully accepted, they are interpreted as dogmas rather than metaphysical truths. When the Trinity is considered completely *in divinis* and identical with God as Unity so that Unity has no significance outside of the Trinity, one of whose members then becomes incarnated in history, it is very difficult if not impossible to come to basic theological understanding with Islam or Judaism for that matter. Furthermore, some like John Hick who do seek to interpret the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity in such a way as not to impinge upon the unity of the Divine Principle are not considered as orthodox; nor are they accepted by the mainstream Christian theological community.² As for Muslims, outside Sufi circles there are many who are not willing to follow the Qur'anic doctrine of the universality of revelation to its conclusion and accept Christianity in its traditional and millennial formulation as an authentic religion whose central doctrines must contain the kernel of the truth which must be interpreted in an esoteric and metaphysical manner beyond their literal interpretations in order to bring out their profound accord with the doctrines of Unity (*al-tawhīd*).

If anything, the theological debates of the last few decades between Islam and Christianity demonstrate clearly that, to repeat a saying of Frithjof Schuon, complete accord between religions is not possible in the human atmosphere but only in the Divine stratosphere. Furthermore, ecumenism in order to be efficacious, that is to reach inner unity without doing injustice to the diversity of external forms revealed by Heaven, cannot but be an "esoteric ecumenism".³ If we remember that in the climate of Christianity esoterism is to be found in sanctity and in Islam sanctity in esoterism which is found primarily in Sufism,⁴ it becomes clear why in fact many major theological problems have not received a proper solution in the present day context by those seeking common accord between Islam and Christianity. On the level in which such solutions are sought, that is on the formal level, by scholars of religion and theologians even if they be motivated by good intentions, it is simply not possible to reach an accord which would do full justice to the Islamic and Christian perspectives without distortion. The best that one can do in such cases is to have respect

² On our debate with Hick on major theological issues in Muslim-Christian dialogue see A. Aslan, "Religions and the Concept of the Ultimate—An Interview with John Hick and Seyyed Hossein Nasr," *Islamic Quarterly* 40 (1996): 266-83.

We use the term esoteric to mean the inward dimension and inner reality of things and not occultism with which it is often confused in academic studies of religions.

³ See F. Schuon, *Christianity/Islam—Essays on Esoteric Ecumenism* trans. G. Polit (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Books, 1985).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

for the other and for the Muslims at least to remember the Qur'anic verse, "And argue not with the People of the Scripture (including Christians) unless it be in a mostly kindly manner, save with such of them as do wrong; and say: We believe in that which hath been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; our God and your God is One, and unto Him we surrender" (S. 29:46—Pickthall trans. modified). The rest should be left in God's Hands.

And yet, "esoteric ecumenism" has also taken place as one finds in the writings of many traditionalist writers foremost among them Schuon himself but also many from traditional Christian circles who are at once traditionalist and universalist. The problem remains that a chasm separates the fruit of such efforts from the ordinary dialogues carried out by many scholars and theologians of both sides who are either impervious to such writings or are opposed to the esoteric dimension of their own tradition. Here it may be added that it is quite paradoxical that so many exoteric religious scholars espouse more easily modernistic ideas which undercut the very foundation of their faith than esoterism which could not but strengthen that foundation. In any case the basic theological issues between Islam and Christianity remain unresolved on the formal theological level while on the metaphysical and esoteric level the truths of the two religions reside in harmony which transcends all tensions that lie in the realm of differentiation below the state of principial Unity. It is perhaps better therefore to accept on the formal level certain difference as being precisely irreducible on that level and then go on to cultivate mutual respect even if one is not able to gaze at that principial Unity in which all formal differences are resolved.⁵

A second major set of theological questions involves salvation and the answer to basic question of who is saved. Although there are of course differences in the Christian idea of salvation and the Islamic one of *salāh*, enough similarity exists based on the common doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the reality of posthumous states of the inferno, purgatory and paradise to allow us to ask the question in this form across the religious boundaries of Islam and Christianity. For Christians to extend the possibility of salvation beyond the redemption offered by Christ is difficult indeed. But so is condemning all Muslims to hell-fire at least for Christians of conscience who have had first hand experience of pious Muslims. Some have tried half way solutions such as extending Christ's redemptive grace to Muslims and considering them as "Christians" without knowing it. Obviously such solutions are rejected out of hand by Muslims.

⁵ See our *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 1991), chapter nine, 280-308.

On the Muslim side a most unfortunate "narrowing of faith" has taken place during the past century among many believers as one of the concomitant effects of modernism on the Muslim soul and the reaction to it. Traditional Islamic literature is replete with assertions that if Christians or Jews were to live according to the tenets of their religion, they would be saved. This is perfectly in accord with the teachings of the Qur'ān. Furthermore, it was always argued that the Qur'ān and the *Shari'a* order Muslims to protect the lives, property and religion of the "People of the Book." Now if their religion would simply lead them all to hell, why would God order Muslims to protect them and their religion? This would be a monstrosity against both the justice and the mercy of God.

In the last few decades, rather than perpetuating and expanding this attitude of earlier generations in respecting the religions of the "People of the Book" as leading those who follow it earnestly to "salvation," many Muslims, hardened by attacks against them by both Christian missionaries and secularists, have begun to propagate, often with fanaticism, the idea that all non-Muslims are *kāfir* in the theological (and not metaphorical) sense and condemned to eternal damnation. Although much of the hardening of this attitude is a reaction to blatant attacks against Islam, there is no doubt that the result has been to eclipse to some extent the universalist perspective of Islam itself in certain circles concerning the question who is saved, to which traditional Islam and especially Sufism have always answered those who follow their religion faithfully, if it be an authentic revealed religion which would certainly include Christianity.

In the current dialogue between Christianity and Islam there are of course many groups on both sides with differing degrees of universality of perspective. But whatever the perspective of the two sides might be, it is important to bring out the question of who is saved to the center of the stages of dialogue and discuss it rigorously. It is not only difficult but futile to carry out religious dialogue religiously between one party which considers itself as future inhabitants of paradise and its opponent party which the first party considers as occupiers of hell. There are groups on both sides who hold such views openly but then they do not usually carry out religious dialogue. For those who do so, however, it is imperative to avoid falling into provincialism at the very moment in their history when it is most essential to re-assert the universality of perspective which is stated so clearly for Muslims in the Qur'ān and is inherent in the Islamic tradition. This universalism is in fact in the deepest sense the very *raison d'être* of Islam.

A third set of theological questions concerns sacred law. In the modern world law is seen as being completely distinct from theology while in Islam law, being seen essentially as Divine Law, is not only related to what in the West is called theology but plays the same central role in

Islam as does theology in Christianity. It is, therefore, appropriate to discuss the Islamic and Christian attitudes toward divine and secular law in this section dealing with theological issues.

Both Muslims and Christians contrive in their dialogues, and especially in more popular discourse on the mass media, to criticize the other side on the basis of their understanding of divine and secular law. The idea of "God's laws" is certainly of much importance in Christianity even in this secular age as seen in the constant recurrence of its discussion on such current issues as the abortion debate. And yet law is seen in the West as primarily secular law and historically the Christian churches have easily accepted the difference between God's laws which are moral and spiritual and secular laws which govern the everyday life of people. In fact laws are supposed nowadays to change according to the will of the people and also according to the whims of that strange new deity "the times" which in the mind of so many who speak of the "spirit of the times" or the *Zeitgeist* has come to replace in many ways the function of the *heilige Geist* or Holy Ghost.

The Islamic view of the Divine Law or al-Shari'a is totally different.⁶ Rooted in the immutable sources of the Qur'an and Hadith, this Law possesses a trunk, which has remained firm and steadfast throughout the ages, and branches which have grown according to different temporal conditions. In this perspective the Divine Law molds society and not society the Divine Law. And this Law is no more outdated because "it belongs to seventh century Arabia," than the Sermon on the Mount would be outdated because it was pronounced two thousand years ago in Palestine.

In Muslim-Christian debates, the Muslims have shared with Christians in their lack of comprehension of the view of the other side concerning law, but most of the pressure has come from the Christian side. Few Christians sympathize with Muslims who wish to return to the laws of their religion which were forcefully changed during the colonial period, while in general Muslims have been more sympathetic to Christians who wish to continue to live according to their traditional moral laws in a hedonistic society. Strangely enough, such Christians, many of whom are Evangelicals and new born Christians, are those most opposed to Islam and the attempt of Muslims to live according to their religious laws as do such Christians themselves. In this domain traditional Jews, who possess a Divine Law rooted in the Bible, have a similar conception of Divine Law as do Muslims and could perhaps one day play a greater role in clarifying this issue in the West for both themselves and Muslims.

⁶ We have explained these differences in our *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (London: Harper/Collins, 1994), chapter IV, 93-120.

In any case a major obstacle to Muslim-Christian understanding is the concept of Divine Law versus secular law which also involves the whole idea of a religious versus civil society as well as religious and secular political authority. Without the development of mutual respect of the two sides for each other in the understanding of Divine Law in relation to secular law, genuine respect for each other's perspective and the reaching of accord on certain basic issues will not be possible.

This question is of course clearly related to the relation between spiritual and temporal authority. There are still too many Christians who find fault in Islam because its founder was also the ruler of a human community and because Islam has never separated religion from politics. There are also many Muslims who believe that Christ by giving unto Caesar what is Caesar's made religion an otherworldly affair and marginalized the significance of religion in human life leading finally to the secularization of the West. Yet, at the same time many Muslims also claim that the separation of Christianity from politics in the West is only outward and that there are hidden links between the two which are revealed from time to time as in 1992 through the type of reaction shown to the tragedy of the massacre of Muslims by Christian Serbs by supposedly secularized Western governments devoted to human rights.

There is no way for either Islam or Christianity to impose its views on law on the other, although the modern West in distinction from Christianity is seeking to impose its views of politics in relation to religion upon the whole world and to privatize and "ghettoize" religion—to use the expression of a Catholic sociologist—globally as one sees in the West. For Muslims and Christians there can be no triumphalism if one is seeking mutual understanding. Each side must understand that the figures of both Christ and the Prophet, one of whom refrained from all matters of the world and the other immersed himself in it in order to transform it, were divine possibilities that had to be realized and were therefore realized by God and that both exemplars do in fact come from Him leading to two different perspectives on the relation between spiritual and temporal authority. Furthermore, each side must learn to respect the perspective of the other side beyond all transient opportunism. Each side must also be able to distinguish between the principles involved and contingencies which of necessity partake of the imperfections belonging to the domain of political action.

Finally among theological issues one must mention the fact that strangely enough with the approach of the millennium, one of the theological issues where Christianity and Islam possess more common views and accord than any other two religions, that is eschatology, has also become a major point of contention between certain strands of Christianity and Islam. Both Islam and Christianity believe in an end to human history

marked by divine intervention which for both religions involves Christ and his return. Moreover, the theater for the final events leading to the end of this world is identified by both religions with Jerusalem. Many theological dialogues of the past few decades have brought out these similarities, which, however, are not still well known by most ordinary Christians in the West.

What is paradoxical, however, is that with the approach of the millennium certain Christian groups, identified by some scholars as Christian Zionists, have adopted a virulent anti-Islamic attitude especially as far as the destiny of Jerusalem is concerned and highly support the complete Jewish domination of the city not because of their love for Judaism—for they believe that later the Jews will become Christians—but to carry out what they believe to be stages of human action necessary to prepare for the return of Christ. While some leaders of these groups openly take on an anti-Islamic stance in the Israeli-Palestinian question, others go further and openly identify Islam with the force of the anti-Christ. One hardly needs to emphasize how damaging are the virulent and crazed views of such groups to Muslim-Christian understanding and how unfortunate it is that eschatological doctrines of the two religions, which should constitute one of the main bases of accord between the two religions, should be used by certain Christian groups to ferment hatred against Islam on every level from the spiritual to the political.

Freedom of Worship

During the last few years many Christian groups in the West have complained about the lack of the freedom of worship for Christians in the Islamic world while there is freedom for Muslims to worship in the West. Certain have argued that there should be strict reciprocity and that the West should also curtail the freedom of worship of Muslims in the West accordingly.⁷ This issue has been repeated during the past few years especially in Great Britain and America but also in Germany, creating, on the basis of the lack of knowledge sometimes combined with malice, a major obstacle to Muslim-Christian understanding.

To clarify the issue, it is necessary to bring out clearly the principles as well as the facts involved. First of all historically, there was always

⁷ A case in point is that in 1996 in the debate at Oxford, England, to build a new edifice for the Center of Islamic Studies, some wrote in a local paper that Oxford should not allow minarets amidst the Church spirals of Oxford (in fact the edifice is not a mosque and does not have a minaret) because no churches are allowed in the Islamic world. An Englishman soon reminded the readers of the newspaper in question of what the sky lines of cities like Cairo or Beirut, combining minarets and spirals, really look like.

greater right of worship for Christians in the Islamic world than for Muslims in the Christian world as can be seen in the destiny of Christians in the Islamic world and Muslims in Spain, Portugal, Sicily and many other regions during and at the end of the Middle Ages when the West was a veritable Christian civilization. All one has to do is to compare the fortunes of Christians and Muslims in the two peninsulas, namely Asia Minor and Iberia, which exchanged hands between the followers of the two religions during the fifteenth century. Today, even after five centuries of the rise of secularism in the West, there are more Christian churches in present day Iran alone than there are mosques in all of Western Europe. Despite sad exceptions and the fact that the life of religious minorities was not ideal in all Islamic societies (or for that matter other societies), Muslims have in general guaranteed the freedom of worship of Jews and Christians under their rule through the ages as a result of which some of the most ancient forms of the rites and practices of these religions have survived within the Islamic world to this day, including the Aramaic mass, long after they were lost elsewhere.

Furthermore, in general the freedom of the practice of religion in the West is due not so much to Christianity—although there are notable exceptions to this assertion—but to the curtailment of the power of Christianity by secularism and secularist ideas of civil liberties and rights which grew out of the American and French Revolutions.⁸ While the Puritans ruled in New England on the basis of a Christian theocracy, there was certainly no freedom of worship for the Native Americans, while countless natives were killed by Catholic Spaniards and Portuguese in Central and South America precisely on the pretext that they were “savages” and not Christian, not to speak of giving them the right and freedom of worship. Nor was this attitude confined to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In later periods many instances concerning the right of Muslims to worship freely in Europe came up, sometimes defended by European governments for political reasons while being opposed by local church authorities. It is well known how long it took to finally receive permission to construct a mosque in Rome where tens of thousands of Muslims reside and what battles are being fought right now in the suburbs of Washington to build a new campus for an Islamic school, the opposition coming not from ordinary citizens most of whom are in accord with the plan, but from a few Christian ministers who keep preaching their opposition although there are also many Christians who have supported the plan for the new campus of the school.

⁸ By this assertion we do not mean in any way to defend secularism or praise its curtailing the power of Christianity in the West but only to state a historical fact

When one speaks of the freedom of worship in the Islamic world and the West in Muslim-Christian and not only political terms, one must face the issue with honesty and objectivity. In most of the Islamic world today there is as much freedom of worship for Christians as there is freedom of worship for Muslims in the West not to speak of the much greater influence that minority Christians exercise on Muslim authorities in *Dār al-Islām*, than vice-versa. Yet, the intensity of attachment to the teachings of the religion, performance of rites, belief in the theological tenets of the faith and similar factors for Muslims today must be compared with the Europe of 1400 and not of the present day. It is not only ten percent of Muslim Egyptians, Syrians or Persians who perform their daily prayers and attend mosques as is the case of the population of so many Western countries and especially Europe as far as church attendance is concerned. The freedom of worship for Christians in the Islamic world must be understood in light of this basic reality and the realization that this freedom does not come from the imposition of secularism in the Islamic world, as it has done in the West, but from Islam itself.

And that is why precisely when discussing the question of the freedom of worship certain religious factors enter into play which are not identical between Islam and Christianity but which need to be taken absolutely into consideration. Christianity did not arise in Europe but came from Palestine and does not have a "holy land," a term used in the Qur'ān and not the Bible, in the same way that do Islam and Judaism. Likewise, the spaces of a Christian church have a different function than do the spaces of a mosque or a Hindu Temple. A Muslim or a Hindu could walk into St. Peter's Basilica without any offense to Christians except perhaps at the time of mass, whereas neither a Christian nor a Muslim may go into a Hindu temple without causing serious offense to Hindus. As for Muslim places of worship, some can be visited like churches when it is not the time of prayers, while others usually adjacent to tombs of saints are closed to non-Muslims. Respect among religions requires not to search for or impose uniformity but to respect such differences and more generally the different ways in which the sacred manifests itself in various religious universes.

Now, within the Islamic world there is an area designated according to Muslim belief by God Himself through the Prophet as a holy precinct (*ḥaram*) encompassing the area of Makkah and its environs up to Madinah. Only Muslims are allowed within this area and Christians should not complain that since they allow Muslims to visit the Vatican, then why they are not afforded equal access on the basis of strict reciprocity. How the sacred manifests itself in each religion is dependent upon the Divine Will for those who accept the authenticity of that religion. In Islam the holy area of Makkah and Madinah possesses this unique feature as do

certain sanctuaries such as those of Moulay Idrīs in Fez, Ra's al-Ḥusayn in Cairo, the tomb of 'Alī in Najaf, the mausoleum of 'Alī al-Riḍā, the eighth Shī'ite Imam, in Mashhad, etc. In principle outside such areas, there should be freedom of worship in the rest of the Islamic world for the "People of the Book" which includes Christians, provided such a freedom is not combined with political coercion and cultural domination.

When we look at the situation in the Islamic world today, we find that in the vast majority of Islamic countries from Indonesia and Malaysia, to Bangladesh and Pakistan, to Iran and Iraq, to Turkey to Black Africa and of course nearly all the Arab countries, with the exception of Arabia (and certain areas of the Sudan), Christians under Muslim rule possess freedom of worship. If here and there one finds occasional attacks against Christians, it is almost always based not on religious issues but on political and economic factors derived from the fact that local Christians have often sided with Western ruling powers against the Muslim populations in the past two centuries and today, although a minority, they enjoy much more economic and political power than their numbers would warrant.

There is also a cultural element to consider in the case of recent converts in the hands of Western missionaries. In contrast to traditional Christian elements such as the Orthodox of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan who identify themselves completely with the Arabic culture of the societies in which they live, many new converts identify themselves culturally almost completely with the West, causing thereby natural resentment similar to some extent to the resentment of Christians in small English villages toward Indians and Pakistanis trying to pursue life patterns which are exotic and strange to the scene although even in this comparison there is a major difference in the dynamics of power. The power of India and Pakistan in the West can hardly be compared with that of America and Europe in the Subcontinent. Despite such occasional frictions, however, the freedom of worship remains a reality for the vast majority of Christians in the Islamic world and the recent moves in America to legislate for the protection of minorities (in reality Christian) should apply certainly as much to Muslim minorities in many lands such as China as it does to the Christians in that country and elsewhere.

Besides Islamic countries in which there is nearly complete freedom of worship for Christians, there is a second category of countries where as a result of factors already mentioned, as well as more particular local forces, some curtailment of this freedom has taken place in the past few years. A case in point is Egypt where for centuries the 10% Coptic population lived in remarkable peace with the 90% Muslim majority but where during the past few years there have been attacks against certain churches and Coptic villages. It must be known, however, that such attacks have been strongly condemned by the highest Islamic authorities of the country and

not only by the government. While the situation is deplorable, one that needs to be corrected as soon as possible, it must also be realized that there are also complicated political and economic issues involved and that in any case this phenomenon should not be a source of contention between Christianity and Islam in their mutual dialogue for better understanding any more than should the torching and burning of several mosques in America during the past decade.

Another category of countries are those in which the lack of freedom of worship has been raised specifically as an issue by Christian groups in the West, chief among them being the Sudan and Saudi Arabia. From what has been said already it should be clear that the case of these two countries is in fact very different. In the Sudan there are of course many Christians with close contact with missionary groups from the West and receiving political and even military support from them, while a war goes on which is far from being between Islam and Christianity although there is rivalry between the two religions in seeking to woo to their ideas followers of the African religions who still survive within the Sudan. There is also the question of material help given to missionaries with wide range political ramifications. All of those factors have naturally affected the question of the freedom of worship in certain areas marred by tragic wars and battles. To keep bringing up the case of the Sudan (or even Saudi Arabia) in the West as proof of lack of freedom of worship in the whole of the Islamic world is to say the least disingenuous and hardly contributes to better relations between the two religions. One wonders how the West would react if a major Muslim leader would visit a Western country's Muslims without permission of that country's political authorities. Still lingering colonial struggles must be taken exactly for what they are and not made use of religiously at least by those seeking earnestly rapprochement between the two religions.

As for Saudi Arabia, as already stated, its heartland at least presents a special case related to the structure of the Islamic religion which must be respected accordingly and which could not be altered by Muslims under any conditions, whether they be Saudi or non-Saudi. The fact that Saudi culture sees the whole of the domain under its jurisdiction under the same light is another matter based upon strong historical traditions which it is for the people of that country to evaluate and act upon. The argument that since there are no churches in Saudi Arabia, therefore, one should not allow the Saudis to build a mosque in the West, is totally erroneous. It is as if Muslims were to say that since the Vatican does not allow mosques in Vatican City, there should be no Catholic churches allowed in the Islamic world.

Freedom of worship also involves the question of conversion and apostasy. Christian missionaries often criticize Muslims for branding a Muslim

who converts to Christianity as an apostate (*murtadd*) whose punishment is death according to the dictates of the Sharī'a. First of all let it be said that if such a promulgation had been carried out strictly historically and especially in modern times, there would not have been all those Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Black African Christians of Islamic origin who are presently living as Christians in the Islamic world. Secondly, the Sharī'a injunction against apostasy was in the context of the presence of the Islamic state in which turning away from Islam implied not only a religious act but also treason against the state.

Present day conditions necessitate a re-thinking by Muslims of this whole issue in light of the immutable principles of the Sharī'a, which must now be applied to situations where the question of treason to the state, also punishable by death in many Western countries to this day, does not apply. There is in fact a movement afoot among traditional authorities in Islamic Law to rethink and reconsider the status of Muslim conversion to another religion in the context of the present day situation. The problem has not been as yet solved in a final manner but the process of addressing it has begun in Egypt, Iran and elsewhere. The situation is of course still difficult in that the political dimension of the issue has not at all disappeared as can be seen by the strong concern of Western circles for the "human rights" of let us say Pakistani Christians even when they calumnize the Prophet of Islam. This is done under the banner of the defence of free speech while the same circles show little concern for the rights of free speech of the Muslim citizens of the same countries as long as their governments are pro-Western.

In any case in this whole debate about the freedom of worship, the points discussed briefly here must be kept in mind by both Muslims and Christians and one should constantly remember the actual realities on the ground including the vast number of Christian churches which exist throughout the Islamic world. One should also remain aware of the fact that while Muslims in the West enjoy economic and political power way below what their numbers would warrant, in the Islamic world and also many African countries, where the governments are still supported by Western powers, exactly the reverse is true. Furthermore, as we shall see shortly, missionary activity is often combined with cultural and political domination by alien forces so that reactions against such phenomena must not be confused with the curtailing of the freedom of the right of worship.

Missionary Activity

Needless to say, one of the most contentious issues in the dialogue between Islam and Christianity is missionary activity. Both Christianity and Islam envisage themselves to have a global mission and are therefore rivals in many areas of the world, but at this moment of history there is

such disparity of power and wealth between the two sides, that the situation cannot but lead to serious contention and even conflict at least in certain areas. For centuries there was the rivalry of the crescent and the cross especially in the Mediterranean world. Each side in addition to its religious message possessed its own military might and distinct culture. But even across battlefields commerce continued and ideas were exchanged. The Christians came to the Islamic world with the Bible in their hand and if we put aside the Crusades many of them sought to practice the charity and poverty of Christ. Then during the colonial period, there arrived Western powers supporting the missionaries and the Bible on the one hand and wielding the sword on the other. Lest one forgets, during the colonial period missionaries were almost always supported by the military power of the West, even of governments such as that of France which was persecuting Catholics within its own border. This phase was in time followed by educational and medical crusades which had as its consequence the destruction of the unity and homogeneity of Islamic civilization. Even when some Christian missionary schools in the Islamic world were secularized, they remained major centers of missionary activity although now for secular humanism. Many missionaries were in fact happy to destroy the faith of their Muslim students even if this did not lead to their becoming Christian. It is not accidental that some of the most virulent anti-Western nationalists in the Islamic world learned their secular nationalism in such missionary schools.

During the past few decades Christian missionary activity has increased but now often wed to current Western consumerism and commercialism as far removed from the poverty preached by Christ or St. Francis of Assisi as possible. It is through the lure of worldly things combined with a diluted form of Christianity that many are wooed away from Islam. With all the syringes, libraries, employment advantages and now wealth on the one side and the lack of them on the other, the level playing field of the earlier centuries has been destroyed causing often anger and reactions to the much wealthier Christians on behalf of the majority Muslims, especially in times of economic difficulty as can be seen in the recent events of Indonesia,

It is of the utmost importance to discuss in all honesty this question of missionary activity from the perspective of the two sides. Each must of necessity allow the freedom of being witness to its faith in the world dominated by the other. But one must also deal with other questions resulting from the earlier close association between missionary activity and colonialism and what some have called "cultural imperialism." Although Christianity no longer possesses the dominant position it held once upon a time in the West and perhaps needs to send missions to re-Christianize the West itself, still Christians would protest strongly if Muslim missionaries

had private airfields in Western countries and if Christians were to see that the children of most of their social, political and intellectual elites went to Islamic schools supported financially not by local Muslims but by foreign Muslim governments.

In this sensitive issue there is also the looming presence of modern Western culture, which, although secular in most of its basic features, has been espoused during the past few centuries by Western Christianity as if it were Christian.⁹ This predominantly anti-religious culture has therefore been propagated among Muslims by many Christians as if it were part of the Christian message. When it comes to the consideration of creating a veritable Christian presence among Muslims in modern times such figures as Père de Foucault and Louis Massignon have been truly exceptional. Indeed, the major obstacles set on the road to Christian Muslim understanding cannot be removed without taking into full consideration the presence of what we have had the occasion to call the "silent third partner" in the current Muslim-Christian dialogue, namely, modernism in all its modes and ramifications.

Differing Attitudes Towards Modernism

It is strange that despite countless books and articles that have been written concerning theological modernism in Christianity on the one hand and Islam and modernism on the other, in depth little attention has been paid until now to the role of modernism, that "silent third partner" in all its ramifications in the Muslim-Christian dialogue.¹⁰ There are those in the Christian camp who complain why Islam does not modernize along the lines of Christianity and evaluate contemporary Islam accordingly. In fact most Western studies on Islam are completely determined by this unstated prejudice that modernism is a positive force to be taken seriously not as an adversary but as source of emulation, with the result that Islamic realities are judged and evaluated by the degree to which they accommodate modernism with little attention paid to what modernism has done to Christianity and its role in Western societies during the past few centuries. Every Muslim who deviates from Islamic orthodoxy, con-

⁹ There are now some signs of change in this attitude in certain Christian circles, both Protestant and Catholic, which are trying to present Christianity to the non-Western world independent of the particular embellishments of Western civilization

¹⁰ By modernism we do not mean what is simply contemporary, but a particular worldview which places man rather than God at the center of things and which arose in the West during the European Renaissance, spreading from the eighteenth century onward to other parts of the globe. R. Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, trans. O. Osborne (Ghent, NY: Sophia Perennis et Universalis, 1996); also W.N. Perry, *Challenges to a Secular Society* (Oakton, VA: The Foundation for Traditional Studies, 1996).

sidered in its widest and most universal sense, is immediately aggrandized in Western circles as the next possible Martin Luther and those who do not depart from the traditional norms are usually neglected, no matter how profound their thought, by Western scholars who are usually trained to study change rather than permanence and to bestow the epithet of "significant" only to what changes and not to what reasserts the permanent and the enduring.

On the Muslim side, serious Muslim thinkers are puzzled why Western Christian theology allows itself to be so seriously affected by passing philosophical trends and by the scientism which has now staked its claim as a rival "religion" in the modern world. Comparing Christianity to Islam, Muslims are at a loss to explain why every few decades the very bases of Christian theology seem to undergo major changes if not in all circles, at least in the "liberal" strands of Christianity which are the very elements usually carrying out dialogue with Islam.¹¹ If on the Christian side it has been the ecumenists who are usually "liberal" and modernists often in confrontation with their own co-religionists, on the Islamic side no such similar "ecumenism" equated with modernism exists. Putting a few modernized scholars aside, most of those interested in dialogue with Christianity on the Islamic side have relied upon what one might call "Qur'anic ecumenism" and the long tradition of Sufism on the one hand and the Shari'ā on the other. If they have met opposition from their co-religionists, it has been from those Muslims who, influenced by so-called current reformism, refuse to heed the import of the universalist message of the Qur'ān. The debate has therefore been set under very different terms in the two contemporary worlds of Islam and Christianity.

A Christian seeking to understand the Islamic view of the nature of God, prophecy, eschatology, ritual, etc. may wish to refer to different schools of interpretation, Sunni, Shī'ite, Sufi, Ash'arī and the like, but he can rest assured that if he selects any of these strands in the rich tapestry of Islamic thought, he will not have to contend with the problem of changing his very understanding of these principles of the religion from century to century, as a Muslim would have to contend with sea changes from a St. Thomas to a modern Catholic theologian or a Jonathan Edwards to a modern Protestant preacher. There is nothing in Islam to compare with

¹¹ It is of significance that there has been much less dialogue between Islam and those elements of Christianity which have been theologically much more conservative such as traditional Catholicism, conservative Protestantism and Orthodoxy than with the more "liberal" segments of the Christian community. In the last few years, however, an important number of dialogues have taken place between both Russian and Greek Orthodoxy and Islam and continue to do so. These exchanges are bound to be of great significance for Christian and Muslim dialogue in general, not only politically but also theologically, given the orthodox nature of both sides.

innovations in the understanding of God from the traditional manner that Catholic and Protestant theology have understood Him and certain current views of the Divinity in evolutionary theology à la Teilhard de Chardin or process theology à la John Cobb via Alfred North Whitehead.¹²

Every religion has of course its own inner dynamic and specific history. However, in carrying out religious dialogue between two religions, it must be understood clearly how elements of change drawn from the secular realm have influenced or continue to influence one or both sides. If after long discussions Muslims and Christians come to a common understanding concerning, let us say, the meaning of the Trinity or the nature of revelation, this understanding will be of little avail if the views of one side change subsequently in a serious fashion. For the Muslim Allāh still sits on His Throne (*al-ʿarsh*) and rules the universe and he can hardly understand why after two thousand years Christians are now in need of debating God's gender along with His immutability and perfection and why there is change in basic theological views every few years.

For several centuries Western Christianity has allied itself with modern Western civilization with its essentially secularist outlook based on secular humanism, rationalism, empiricism, nationalism, evolutionism, scientism and skepticism. It has also for the most part refused to ally itself with other religions still breathing within a sacred universe, preferring often an anti-religious Western secularist ally to a non-Christian but religious one. This position has been of course a choice made by Western Christianity, or at least much of it, and it cannot be the concern of Islam or any other religion. But its consequences must be taken seriously into consideration if there is to be any dialogue in depth beyond platitudes and diplomatic gestures,

The understanding of how the "kingdom of man" came to replace the "kingdom of God"¹³ in the West is a matter of the greatest import for all future religious dialogue between Islam and the West. Muslims are in general unaware of the deeper meaning of modernism and the dynamics which transformed medieval Christian civilization, which like Islam was based on faith, to the modern and now post-modern world. Many of the more traditional Islamic thinkers in carrying out debates with Christian theologians think and act as if they were facing St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas or Nicholas of Cusa, and despite two centuries of domination by the modern West still suffer from the lack of an in depth understanding of modernism.

¹² For the whole question of change and permanence in the traditional and modern context see S. H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, 221ff.

¹³ See T. Lindbom, *The Tares and the Good Grain*, trans. A. Moore (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988).

In order to remove this obstacle in dialogue, it is essential to take full cognizance of the third apparently "silent partner" and to realize that in fact this partner, although its voice seems to go unrecognized, is far from being silent and in fact wields pervasive influence. What is needed is to have both sides of the dialogue recognize fully the significance of the presence of modernism in current religious dialogue and to understand fully how modernism affects this dialogue on various levels from the purely theological, to the social and political, to the scientific and technological. What is at stake here is not only making possible better understanding between the two religions, but also to enable each side to understand how and why the forces of modernism have affected or not affected the other side. The future of the religious history of the world will of course depend on the attitude of various religions toward the banner of forces and ideas unfurled in the world by modernism in the light of their own sacred and immutable principles and teachings. One cannot be sure that this attitude will be the same among Christianity and non-Christian religions and certainly until now at least it has not been the same for Western Christianity in comparison with all other non-Christian religions and even Orthodox Christianity, Judaism in its Western manifestation being an exception.

What is certain, however, is that a serious intellectual effort is necessary to bring out the impact on religious dialogue of modernist and now post-modernist ideas concerning the nature the Divine and of man, of intelligence and knowledge, of the meaning of life, of the structure and origin of the universe and many other fundamental issues, which are also of central concern to all religion and therefore cannot but affect Muslim-Christian dialogue. This effort must also pay attention to the very different way in which these ideas, many of which issued from the European Enlightenment and claimed for themselves universal application, have influenced Christianity on the one hand and Islam on the other. If one might use the metaphor of a happy marriage in the Christian sense as the goal of serious religious dialogue between Christianity and Islam, it might be said that here even more than in ordinary human life a *ménage à trois* is impossible and religiously unacceptable. Nor can its presence be accepted in a marriage seen through Islamic eyes since the third element, being of a secularist nature, does not even belong to a religious universe and cannot participate in a religious marriage. Rather, the third partner must be recognized for what it is and not allowed to dictate relations between Islam and Christianity which, with the presence of this "silent partner", will always remain shaky and unstable on the theological level although useful accommodations can always be made on the practical, social and political levels.

Concluding Comments

The obstacles mentioned above must not be considered to be insurmountable. They are discussed here not to cause discouragement but to present the reality of the present situation beyond political niceties and diplomatic decorum. Problems must first be stated in honesty before they can be solved. We believe, in fact, that with good will, love for truth and charity, rather than passion, fanaticism and love for power, most of these obstacles can be overcome. What is needed is to understand and accept first of all the universal metaphysics and perennial wisdom in light of which it is possible at least for the few who are universalists to assert the universality of the Truth while accepting each revelation of the Truth as a unique revelation to be deeply respected as being the result of God's Will and reflecting some aspects of His Wisdom. Then it is necessary to remember the following verses from Islamic and Christian sources: "What is the life of this world but play and amusement? But best is the home in the other world." (S. 6:32) and "But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6. 33) It is therefore a sin in the theological sense of the term to put worldly expediency before the basic goal of religion which is to live according to God's Will and die in the state of grace, to use a Christian term. There is also the need, mostly on behalf of Christianity in whose domain modernism was first born and nurtured, but also by the modernized Muslims, to realize that there is no way to make peace between Islam and Christianity on the one hand and secular and agnostic humanism on the other. Fire and water cannot be harmonized together.

As the challenges of the modern world become ever more pervasive and overwhelming, and as unprecedented crises ranging from the destruction of the natural environment to the total desecration of life by technological penetration into the very structures of the web of life threaten to an ever greater degree the religious conception of life, Christians and Muslims will discover to an ever greater degree that they have much more in common with each other than they have differences. Confrontation between the two religions still persists in lands as far apart as Indonesia, the Sudan, Albania and Nigeria, but these rivalries and confrontations can easily be overcome through the realization of the much greater danger to both religions of the globalization of an avid consumerism which is devouring to an even greater degree the souls of men and women and destroying with incredible rapidity the very fiber of life upon which human existence here on earth depends. Let us hope that the problems and obstacles mentioned here can be overcome by turning to the spiritual, intellectual and ethical teachings of both traditions and through casting one's gaze upon the azure heaven, the luminous symbol of the Divine Empty-

rean, from which both religions have descended with the same task of guiding their followers back to their original paradisal abode.

In Divine Love there is no difference between the monastery
and the tavern of ruins,¹⁴

Wherever it may be, there is manifested the light of the
Face of the Friend (Hāfiẓ).

*George Washington University
Washington, DC*

SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR



¹⁴ "Tavern of Ruin" or *Aharābāt* is the symbol of the Sufi center in classical Persian poetry.

"MY TEARS INTO THY BOTTLE" PROPHETHOOD AND GOD

i

The Hebrew psalmist pleads with Yahweh to 'collect his tears into His flask' (Psalm 56.8). Since 'bottle' and 'flask' in his usage could only be a wine-skin, the prayer seems quite ludicrous. Even a most copious weeper would surely have his tears lost in so capacious a container. When in Rome the like of Nero shed ostentatious tears, they scupped them off the cheek into cup-ended tubes shaped like a fountain pen and they sufficed. Is there not something quite fantastic in the idea of tears being cherished for quantity or being appropriately gathered into a jar? Is not the whole notion utterly incongruous, turning the tokens of emotion into a curious relic as if the sacrament in their shedding could be turned back into a physical commodity?

Even if that could be so of human tears in human tear-cups, there must be something more oddly credulous still in supposing one's tears thus far relevant to God. "*My* tears in *Thy* bottle"! The psalmist was often free with these pronouns but is not this notion of Yahweh and his tears the most impossible of all? Though here in Psalm 56 is the only place where his fastidious claims on Yahweh go to such strange length, is it not one too many, an index to an extravagantly self-centered mind? Surely here is an extreme Hebraic form of that instinctive Biblical sense of our mattering humanly to God. Ought not the pleader of Psalm 56 to heed instead the prayer of Psalm 19.13: "Keep Thy servant from presumptuous sins"? There is no such presumption in the Qur'ān.

Yet we need patience with the psalmist's tearfulness. For he has it in a good cause. Many psalms are freely attributed to David—this included. For the proud title: "the psalms of David" flies like a possessive flag over the whole Psalter claiming a diverse poetry for the one 'sweet singer of Israel.' Psalm 56 may perhaps be his, for its allusions might be fitted into his fugitive days as outlaw, brigand, mercenary chief for Philistines or protagonist in the uncrowning of Saul, as well as the royal target of the wiles of Absalom.

However, it is more likely that Psalm 56 belongs with a quite different *mise-en-scène*, namely that of a harassed and despairing prophet. This would bring it squarely—for its situation if not its sentiment—into the or-

bit of the Qur'ān. 'Daily they twist my words' or 'wound me with theirs,'¹ 'all their thinking is about how to injure me.' The writer sounds very like one enduring what Hebrews 12.3, in respect of Jesus, calls "the contradiction (*antilogion*) of sinners against him." He senses conspiracy on every hand. He is closely watched for occasion to scorn or capture him. His life is full of threats: he is condemned to wandering in perpetual insecurity, and yearns to ask: "Are not these things noted in Thy book?"

That reads like a very Qur'anic question.² We do not imagine the adventurer David in frequent preachments that aroused resentful hearers. The picture fits far more exactly the burden of a Jeremiah, who comparably poured out his soul to the God who sent him into a hazardous and lonely mission.³ "Thy vows are upon me, O God," is the language of a prophet.

It is here that we reach the theme of this article which—it might seem—has begun so oddly for an edition of *The Muslim World* explicitly consecrated to the study of Muslim-Christian relations. 'Tears in God's bottle' might seem impossibly remote from that publishing intention and unlikely in the netting of a sane 'guest-editor.'

Yet prophethood is a deeply mediating theme between Islam and Christianity, being the core concept of the Qur'ān and, in part, of the Bible. It is the seam we need to mine all we can if we are to surmount the wilful prepossessions that dog our many prejudices. Further, prophethood is invariably a venture into risk, into pain, and into anguish of heart. 'Burden' is the term traditional not only for the import of what is being said but for personal cost of saying it in a hostile world.

Two things necessarily follow. The one is how bare spokesmanship passes into, and comes to belong with, personality. Given what 'burden' entails it is impossible for the prophet to be neutralized into a postman with an envelope. How he acts—how and who he is—under the burden inevitably enters into what he means. The other is that the whole pro-

¹ The translations vary. The Vulgate has "in conspectu tuo" for the "wine-skin," in line with the LXX "in Thy presence." Perhaps we should understand a plea for divine notice of 'homelessness' ("count my tossings") and lament for loss.

² The *Kitāb* in which all that is 'forwarded' to eternal reckoning by mortals while on earth is set down, to be produced at the great assize. While *al-Kitāb* is used overwhelmingly for the Qur'ān itself, for the other usage see e.g., S. 45:28: "every people called to its book," and S. 34:3 and 83:7f., with the words *fi sijnin*, meaning 'indelibly,' for ever 'captured' or 'prisoned.' Cf. Daniel 7.10: "the books were opened," and the allusion, in different context, to "the book of remembrance" in Malachi 3.16. Also Job 14.17, where he muses on God's rigorous registering of everything.

³ The so-called 'Confessions' of Jeremiah are an anguished recital of the loneliness and costliness of mission in God's call. They sound the deepest reaches of prophetic sorrow.

phetic mission is on behalf of Yahweh, of Allāh. No authentic prophet sends himself. There is at work a divine-human proxy. Allegedly divine speech carries on human lips and, therefore, in some sense rides with human personality. The burdening is thanks to the sending and, in no way, otherwise. We cannot have prophethood and elude this divine recruitment of stake in, and share with, the human means.

Perhaps, then, for all the psalmist's extravagance of phrase, there is point in 'the tears and the wine-skin.' For the God who is in no way absent from the sending of the prophet, nor indifferent to the content of the message, nor reckless about the response awaited or the obedience enjoined, can hardly be absent, indifferent, reckless, in respect of the tribulation His proxy undergoes on His behalf. 'Are not these things noted in Thy book?' is a question expecting the answer Yes. Our purpose, then, against all the censors in the mind, is to take forward the theme of the anguish of the messenger into our theology of faith, believing it the heart of our mutual liability with God as Muslims and Christians.

ii.

That there are censors in the mind both ways is evident enough. There are still some Christians unwilling to concede—the word they would use—the Islamic status of the Qur'ān and the genuine *waḥy*, or 'inspiration,' of Muḥammad. They are fewer than they used to be, bigotry apart, and those still hesitant would think differently from the gratuitous eloquence of Thomas Carlyle, wistfully hailed by Muslims at the time despite the condescension in the way he rehabilitated "the Prophet as Hero."⁴ There still remain vital things at issue for the Christian mind in the sequel to the Hijra. Attitudes have, in some cases, been conciliatory at the expense of what still persists.⁵ Yet, seeing that all things post-Hijra in the politicization

⁴ Carlyle was fascinated by the notion of personal greatness as the clue to history and appraised Muḥammad in that sense. "I mean to say of him all the good I can," he wrote, characterizing the Prophet as "an earnest confused soul from the unknown deep," "a fierce mass of life cast up from the great bosom of Nature herself," "the confused ferment of a great human soul," "the great man was always as lightning out of heaven." Carlyle did not realize how condescending he was, but some Muslims hailed his *tour de force. Heroes and Hero Worship* was a measure of how far change had come and how far it still needed to go. References to the Qur'ān were patronizing at best, and at the worst crude. There was also the notion about Islam being "a bastard kind of Christianity"; ed. of 1897, 42-77.

⁵ One recent example is Martin Forward, *Muhammad: A Short Biography* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1997). Apologia for what would be barbarity at another time by appeal to a culture once obtaining can be sustained only if the apologist excludes the claim that concerns, as Islam surely does, a finality inclusive of all times. What might be culturally acceptable, or politically realist, needs also to be religiously ultimate or fails as a paradigm. To concede 'datedness' is to forego finality.

of Islam were on behalf of the essential message,⁶ that message remains intact and crucial for any legitimate anxiety concerning its sequel. Without the former there could be no arguable onus against the latter.⁷

And for intelligent, fair-minded, Christian will to Muslim converse and mutuality of study and action, there must be the steady pragmatic case for reckoning with faith-people by the faith that 'peoples' them. It is futile to love Muslims and have only a Christian quarrel with Islam, or to ignore the wide territories of near-identical readings of *humanitas* under God. If we believe at all in 'incarnation,' then it is where folk are, and in where-with they comprehend, that they are to be found.

On every Islamic count, there will be instinctive censorship of any case for divine proxy in prophethood arguably entailing divine proxy in suffering. Yet it would seem impossible to deny that messengers, in all their capacities, are vicariously such for God's sake and no less impossible to think them somehow deserted when the burden—moving from word to pain, from carrying a truth to carrying a sorrow—afflicts them and there are tears that somehow belong. There is certainly, for messengers in the Qur'ān, a fearing to err either in recital or receiving. Will there not also be a fearing to flinch in sustaining the task? Will this not somehow 'enter into God,' seeing that, for God's sake, it 'enters into them'?

Writing in a loyal Muslim way both to safeguard and yet explore classic perceptions of wahy, John Renard avers:

It is a commonplace to insist that at no time have the personalities of the messengers influenced the message delivered. That is not to say, however, that God does not engage these conduits [sic] of divine revelation on an intensely personal level, or that the messengers do not in turn respond on an intensely personal level, or that the messengers do not in turn respond to the divine initiative in a fully human way.⁸

Is that engaging on *every* level not reciprocal, or only feasible until suffering supervenes? At all events, it is vital to agree that God engages in personalities that are revelatory of His word "on an intensely personal level." The question before us will not then be 'whether' but 'how far.'

In serious inter-faith exchange it is imperative to ascertain, and respect, the concerns which underlie or inspire what makes another party sharply resistant to meanings one is striving to interpret across a resulting

⁶ It is always vital to keep this perspective. What the Hijra was on behalf of, namely divine unity truly acknowledged, must be both the test and the criterion.

⁷ In the sense that, were the military events merely feuding adventures or undisciplined *ghazwa*-style raiding, they would be fit only for due censure, while a genuine religious purpose might exonerate them. See further note 34 below.

⁸ John Renard, *Seven Doors to Islam* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996), 2.

bias. In this case, the strong Islamic instinct to disavow any divine vicarious 'engagement' (borrowing the just quoted word) in human travail *fi sabil Allāh*,⁹ stems from the fear of committing *shirk*. That fear, in all its legitimacy, stems in turn from the Meccan context of Muḥammad's mission needing to be urgently rescued from a chronic idolatry. Hence the rigorous insistence on divine otherness and absolute transcendence. As resistant to shirk, that stance was/is fully valid. It is one Christian theology shares. However, there is nothing remotely idolatrous about perceiving a divine participation in the vicarious burden of prophets in their on-behalf-ness for God.

On the contrary, that role was precisely in the service of the divine unity. The hostility it had to undergo it underwent in the very denunciation and elimination of shirk. It would be irony indeed if the divine dimension in prophetic agency were seen as entailing the very shirk prophethood was sent to terminate. Moreover, the proper defeat of shirk is to associate with divine action those very items of human experience which give rise to pagan divinization—hills and oases, natural phenomena, fertility agricultural and ethnic, the stars and seasons and a diversity of earth-experience. For all these are inside a Creator's creation and the benison of creaturehood. Idolatry is simply wonder, fragility, precariousness and wistful fears and hopes, all falsely directed towards pseudo-objects or powers. Those attitudes have to be re-directed to their true and only rendezvous in the unsleeping power and mercy of Allāh alone.

This was a major measure of the Prophet's mission. He did not affirm the existence of Allāh, but His *so/e*-existence, a unity utterly intolerant of the pseudo-worships which pagans made compatible with acknowledgment of an 'Allāh' over them all.¹⁰ That unity was always understood as unifying all things under a single creating and providing and sustaining power, making both superfluous and heinous all sub-worships as paganly offered. A right doctrine of transcendence has place for creation, human creaturehood, revelation and prophet-sending. 'Exaltedness' has always to be understood as inclusive of the human engagements all these transact and signify. Nor can zeal against idols allow itself to think otherwise. The possibility—as distinct from the actuality—of what Christians call 'incar-

⁹ The frequent phrase in the Qur'ān denoting "the way (or path) of God," which faithful are treading in *jihād* or alms-giving, *sabil* being a possessive of God's on which, nevertheless, humans are walking in a 'walking' that is fulfilling a divine design. Is there not a kind of 'inter-ness' here between what is divine and what is human? Is not all theism in some sense 'incarnational'?

¹⁰ The name or term 'Allāh' was already present—witness 'Abdallāh, Muḥammad's own father. Sense of a remote supreme Being may ride with the accrediting by pagans of a number of lesser deities. Hence the very form of the *shahāda* with its *lā ilāh illā Allāh* "there is (absolutely) no deity except Allāh."

nation' is present in the divine/human situation creation itself contains and prophethood concerns.

It follows then that those 'tears' of the prophet-psalmist are consonant with the divine unity. The word-mission that was his and all his like has its place in the divine economy and, therefore, in some sense in the divine being. Conversely, that divine economy participates in the immediacies of prophetic vocation. It would be right in this context to cite the vital Qur'anic emphasis on the periodicity of revelation,¹¹ its being, as the term is, "piecemeal," or mediated "at intervals." It could not be "sent down all in one piece," as the Quraysh in their taunting way suggested to Muḥammad.¹² For then it would have lacked the significance of the gradual, gathered context by which alone its import could be recognized. Christian theology might be tempted to suggest that the gathering significance of a context, a context inclusive enough to take in a Gethsemane, has always been the meaning of 'God in Christ.'

That would be unduly to anticipate, but that there is a clear logic from divine unity to prophethood and, no less clearly, from prophethood to personality, and from personality in prophetic calling to history and the concreteness of events, cannot sanely be in doubt. Those tears of an unknown servant of despised words, with the crown of thorns of a Messiah, obtain within the unity of God.

Furthermore, it follows from the necessity of prophets and their long successiveness that there is an impliable quality about us-humans that makes society non-impletive of divine law *per se*. It does not suffice for law to announce, to enjoin, to prohibit, to set bounds not to be transgressed. For these, however absolute in the letter, can be freely ignored or defied in the actual.

How this bears on the concept of the finality of prophethood in Muḥammad sets a hard problem for us all, Muslims and others alike. The apparent closure of the prophetic tradition in the Bible has long puzzled thinking minds. If human history ever needed prophets, has the need ever significantly ceased? It might be said that prophecy had its 'afterwards' in eschatology but those futurisms, by being such, left vacant the living present in settling only for perpetual projection.¹³

¹¹ S. 17:106. "Occasions of revelation," (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) are central to all Qur'ān exegesis. The Scripture could only be cumulatively acquired. Muḥammad was enjoined to 'wait for it.'

¹² S. 25:32. Its being serial in time and occasion is explained as reassuring Muḥammad's heart.

¹³ Perhaps 'perpetual projection' is inevitable as long as we have time durationally distinct from time significantly, i.e., time as merely 'a when' and time as 'a what'—a content. Many in modern Judaism see 'the Messianic' as never, ever, 'happening' so that it can always remain a genuine 'hope.'

That Muḥammad is 'the seal of *nubuwwa*' or things prophetic, can be explained in terms of the inclusive, culminatory character of revelation in its Qur'anic shape. The apex of divine guidance having been reached, so that no further wisdom needs to be awaited, however, still leaves the vexed question of impletion in the human world. That question is all too liable to revert to the original one that necessitated the long sequence itself.

The point in no way isolates Islam or entails for it what all faiths and ethicisms confront in the intractability of our humanity. But it does throw back all of us onto the significance of prophetic tears—tears that acutely symbolize the grief, the hurt, the near-futility, of being on such heavenly errands as prophethood fulfills and, too often, fulfills without fulfillment.

It is possible to insist that the situation is better than we think or that it can be suitably overcome by a more assertive reiteration of the law and the revelation. That, to be sure, is how a fundamentalist responds. The hard of hearing must be reached by raising the voice that hails them. Or the accompanying disciplines of ritual, politics and conformity must be more energetically applied. Religions need to confront their social failures by stiffening their demands on the negligent and delinquent. Yet, so doing, they too often bear witness to their own misgivings about their panaceas.

One lively dialogician of faiths, Ismā'īl al-Fārūqī, liked to describe Islam as set "to bring about the actualization of the absolute on earth." *Qua* doctrine, "the divine unity was so crushingly compelling that a man must acquiesce in it as to the conclusion of a geometrical theorem."¹⁴ But what *qua* translation into human life-fabric? One might claim, as he did, to eliminate all paradox from religious faith as being the retreat of lazy minds, but could one eliminate the living paradox of a divine sovereignty inalienable in heaven and readily defied on earth? Can we banish so confidently as he did the wrongings he called "peccatism" or the hopes he dismissed as "saviorism"?¹⁵

iii.

These reflections return us vividly to prophetic tears. It is well to study further the incidence and significance of what we might call 'the weight in the word.' The phrase comes in S. 73:5 addressing Muḥammad: "We will cast upon you [s.] a heavy word." The exegetes differ as to what the

¹⁴ In S. C. Crawford, ed., *World Religions and Global Ethics* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), Chap. 8, "Islamic Ethics," 212.

¹⁵ Isma'īl al-Faruqi, *Christian Ethics* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967), 193-247, where he deplores 'sin-concepts' and 'salvation-yearning,' deriving not from Jesus, but from Church Fathers and Paul.

'heavy' signifies. The context is almost inaugural, with the reference to the Prophet's being "enwrapped" and in deep meditation.¹⁶ Some think the 'weight' lies in the dire requital of the obdurate, others in the physical concomitants in Muḥammad's recipience in line with "the burden breaking your back" from S. 94:3.¹⁷ It would seem wiser to understand the reference to the weight of circumstance into which the task drew him.

If so, it is a situation everywhere ingrained in prophethood, whether the lesser prophet Ṣāliḥ, in the Madā'in named after him, or Joseph, or Moses, or Isaiah, or Zechariah, to whom Jesus referred as nearest to his own time in the catalogue according to Matthew 23.35. Jesus' parable of the vineyard and the messengers sent to the husbandmen underlines the same theme and has its echo in S. 2:87: "Some of them you branded 'Liars' and some you put to death." The strong lament of Jesus over Jerusalem centered on "killing the prophets and stoning the sent ones" (Matthew 23.37), while for Luke 19.44 "the time of visitation" means his own advent.

It is evident on all hands that humanity is invariably hostile to divine messengers, hence a certain heroism necessary to the prophetic vocation.¹⁸ John Renard sees this fact as providing Muslims a lens through which to read painful events in their own story. Certainly Muḥammad himself drew courage from the precedents in long history of the antagonism he was experiencing himself in the Meccan story. That seems to have been one purpose in the oft repeated narratives of his predecessors in the messenger-role, the other expressly being to warn and reproach a local audience built in the same resistant mould.

It is as if every God-sent figure finds the footprints of pain in which he too must tread. It is therefore fair to urge that, in measure, there is a discernible parallel between the local experience of Jesus between Galilee and Jerusalem, and the local experience of Muḥammad in and around his native Mecca, between the antecedents of the passion of the one and the Hijra of the other. Doubtless the issues turned on things unique to either locale, yet in either case the history meant that what was given into mission as 'saying,' was taken into mission as 'suffering.'

Despite all that is harshly contrasted in the sequels, surely there is here a clear way through all the tangles of controversy to something com-

¹⁶ On 'meditation,' or *tahannuth*, see my *Returning to Mount Hira* (London: Bellew, 1994). Many exegetes read the 'weight' of the saying as being the warning served on unbelievers rather than its burden for the speaker.

¹⁷ The allusion is generally taken to refer to Muḥammad's anxiety about his parents' not being Muslim in living before the revelation. Or was it the weight of his pre-Qur'ān years as not yet 'guided'? The burden of an unenlightened paganism?

¹⁸ A theme familiar enough in Carlyle's famous essay "The Prophet as Hero" (see note above) and more recently in John Renard, *Islam and the Heroic Image* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993).

mon between Christianity and Islam, to be shared, if only—also—to be found contrasted.

Nowhere does the Qurʾān question the cross of Jesus as an end-in-view with his community. It only became something that was divinely 'not allowed to happen' in being something darkly intended in the human there and then. Antagonism to Jesus never evaporated: it intensified to the point where it was divinely frustrated by rapture to heaven, out of killing clutches, of the intended victim. Major prophets, at least, need to be vindicated and, in respect of Jesus in his time and place, this meant his safe abstraction from a cross-scenario that ensued without him.¹⁹

Nowhere does an alert Christianity question the burdened tenacity of Muḥammad in the Meccan story, steadily persisting in a harsh setting, battling with vested pagan interests and struggling with the riddle of scant success. The very reiterations of the Qurʾān's salient themes of divine unity and the evil of shirk are witness enough to this quality. When the die is cast for all that Hijra into political-military dimensions entails, and the Christian mind is held by the contrast of Gethsemane, the reality of the burdens read so diversely is not in question, only its issue is. In relationships historically so thwarted and prejudiced, Muslims and Christians today need all the kinships of meaning they can truthfully come by and properly redeem. The suffering role of personality in sentness is one of them. For, either way, it was only out of finding the role of prophethood a suffering one that the respective decisions were taken. What is at odds in wholly disparate decisions sprang from situations thus far facing a similar dilemma.

There are veiled hints in the Gospels that Jesus' disciples, those whom the Qurʾān sees as *anṣār*, or "helpers"—a term that resonates strongly in the Medinan period—were ready for risky action or an appeal to force on behalf of a threatened master.²⁰ The protestations of being ready to die with him, the allusion to "here are two swords," perhaps even the despairing words of Thomas²¹—imply that they might have found such bravado easier to sustain than the pained indecision in which they were caught at the climax. It is a point of which Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusain made great play in his study *City of Wrong*, where he imagined a disciples' council after Jesus' arrest, in which divided opinions about his mind led them to

¹⁹ The relevant Qurʾān and the literature on the 'rapture' of Jesus can be found in my *Jesus and the Muslim* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), 166-88. See also note 22 below.

²⁰ It is traditional to think of the disciples as becoming cowards in the final crisis. But is it not more likely that they were totally at a loss to know how to react with a Jesus who seemingly was moving within a vocation to suffer? How does one protect the unwilling for protection? Hence the sequel of abandonment to despair which became later their desperate anguish of retrospect.

²¹ About 'going to die with him,' on hearing of Lazarus' sickness, John 11.16.

devise a way of getting enquiry to him to which his answer was emphatic: 'No armed effort to be made for me.'²²

Could there conceivably have been a Christ-Hijra to forestall the cross? That a Muslim writer should raise the question even story-wise, and firmly rule it out despite case-making drawn from the Qur'ān to favor it, is extremely perceptive. Perhaps Christian minds have taken what did eventuate around Jesus—by his willing it so—too readily to be any longer in amazement.

That there are these differing scenarios in Jesus and Muḥammad is undeniable. Yet no less emphatic is the truth that they emerged as answers to broadly similar antecedent situations of prophethood face to face with adversity and that adversity stemming from human evil identified by resistance to divine word or words coming from human servanthood.²³ To think and speak of this servant-status in Jesus as Incarnation or in Muḥammad as 'God's speech in the Qur'ān' is to use the contrasting languages of theology and metahistory. How the distinction obtains has embedded itself in the relations of the ensuing faiths in often bitter and barren terms of polemic and controversy.

The central, and in measure the shared, fact, however, is that personality in a decisive piece of history has been taken and understood as the predicate by which respondent faiths relate to God and God relates to them. History, either way, is the frame in which God reckons with us and, responsively, we with God. It is a window through which we see theologically, inasmuch as when we look where it fixes our eyes we comprehend the theme of our worship.

Islam and Islamic theology would not be what they are in a founding history without the Hijra, whose Medinan sequel has its vital place in the text of the Qur'ān.²⁴ Christian theology, no less, turns decisively on the antecedents and the sequel of Gethsemane as the how and the where of 'God in Christ.' In each case—to use the simplest mediating terms—personality in travail in 'the path of God' was the context from which there came contrasted histories from which faiths took their perceptions of God.

²² Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusain, *City of Wrong* [Eng trans of *Qarya Zālma* Cairo, 1953] (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1959, Oxford: Oneworld Publ., 1994), a remarkable study of the motives to crucifixion of Jesus. Points at issue germane here are noted in the Introduction to *City of Wrong*.

²³ It is clear that the respective settings are radically different yet there is a degree of convergence, as indicated, which—given sharp Muslim-Christian antipathies—deserves to be in focus.

²⁴ This Medinan (political) element inside the Qur'ān is the difficult issue for those recent thinkers who want to reverse traditional *naskh* or 'abrogation,' from later over earlier, to earlier over later, so that the Meccan quality (only preaching and no politics) becomes the 'essence' of Islam. Then Medina can be seen as legitimate in that 'there and then,' but no longer now. Yet it remains intrinsically Qur'anic.

In this strange way the course of thought is brought back to the psalm about the tears and the wine-skin, to the griefs of prophethood, born out of human wrongs and appealing to the awareness of God.

Thanks to Jeremiah and Jerusalem and much else, tears are significant in both Biblical Testaments.²⁵ They are less in evidence in the Qur'an. Two passages tell of them. The one is in S. 9:92, a late sura, where would-be militants came to the Prophet asking for mounts. When he had none to grant them, "they turned away, their eyes brimming with sorrow because they had no resources to give" to fulfill their aspiration to serve. On such no onus lay, in contrast to those who had resources to lend and defaulted.

The other passage (S. 5:83) tells of Christians as being "closest to [Qur'an] believers in affection," including "priests and monks." This is because, not being given to arrogance, "their eyes brim with tears at their realization of the truth" of what they hear from the Prophet. Much discussion of this verse in *tafsīr* has centered around whether or not Christian perceptions of Jesus in Christology are *shirk*. Though formerly culpable as *mushrikūn*, they may be tolerated on the assumption that their aberrations are well-meaning in that, though wrongly deifying Jesus, they still wish to affirm the unity of God. That degree of exoneration does not stay to understand how, on Christian ground, Christology is necessary to the unity of God, inasmuch as only redeeming grace cancels the logic of an ultimate dualism.

It would be happier to read S. 5:83 with its 'tears of Christians' as belonging with a welcome to the meanings of creation, creaturehood and human dominion, to the eloquent Qur'anic celebrations of the powers and wonders of external nature, the doxologies of unstinted praise. If, being in no way morbid, Christians are a tear-prone people, it must finally be because of Jesus crucified as supremely 'man of sorrows' in elemental travail ensuing between 'the sin of the world' and 'the power and the wisdom of God.' For the cross answers, as nothing else could, the psalmist's query: 'Are not these things. . . in Thy book?' Or perhaps we should simply recall the lines of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī whose *Mathnawī* has Allāh asking:

Was it not I that summoned thee to service?
Did not I make thee busy with My name?
Thy calling 'Allah' *was* My 'Here am I,'
Thy yearning pain My messenger to thee.
Of all those tears and cries and supplications,
I was the magnet and I gave them wings.²⁶

²⁵ Especially Jesus' lament over Jerusalem on surveying from the crest of the Mount of Olives.

²⁶ Cited from his *Mathnawī* by R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (first ed., London G. Bell and Sons, 1914, reprints), 113.

iv.

But why, it will be asked, this study of contrast, this perceived disparity between cross and Hijra, if from a common prelude of prophetic pain? Is there not something oddly arcane about a discussion of the role of tears? Is there some hidden motive of sustaining, in a yet more subtle way, tensions and controversies we ought—or thought—to have left behind?²⁷

The questions are valid. The point about disparities is that we come to their positive significance only by acknowledging that they are there. We are striving to do both and, as in all else, we are cast upon 'good faith,' given and received. Happily, on many hands, the movement for dialogue and gracious encounter between Muslims and Christians has gathered pace and promises well. Habits of bigotry and suspicion have been overcome in circles where intelligent reverence is prized and the great complexities are recognized. That does not go for persisting practitioners of polemic in other quarters, but a literature and a posture of mutual dignity and listening gains steadily on past traditions.

However, they are liable, by the same token, to obscure or ignore issues that urgently remain. Four decades ago Khālid Muḥammad Khālid wrote his *Muhammad and Jesus on the Road Together*, with Barabbas as a foil to both.²⁸ Doubtless unknowing, George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, borrowed the same motif in giving the Younghusband Lecture in Lambeth Palace Library, in November, 1996, namely, 'Journeying Together.' As is the pattern in such expositions, a personal identity is confessed but intimations also of inter-identity which forebear to grapple with how the two co-exist or simply 'contain' problems without letting them breathe.

There are doubtless legitimate necessities here, if suspicions still only half dormant, are to be allayed. And there are urgent pleas to be made, in both directions, for due minority tolerance, whether for Christians in Saudi Arabia or for Muslims in the English suburbs. Comparisons here are of course onerous and are muted in a tact that wants, above all, to keep discourse open and prospective.

In similar vein in a high profile occasion in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, the Heir to the British Throne made a thoughtful plea for western appreciation of Islam as an all-inclusive pattern for ecological hallowing and a 'sense of the sacred' in human affairs. He is patron of the Islamic

²⁷ See, for example, Forward, *Muhammad* 108 "Many Muslims think that this [Christian] admiration [for Islam] is the latest, more subtle, trick of orientalists undermining what it purports to admire." Good faith, it seems, needs longer patience

²⁸ Khālid Muḥammad Khālid, Cairo, n.d.

Centre of Studies in the University and his careful commendation of Islamic perspectives to a secular consumerism was entirely apt and urgent.

Yet, at some point, what must be there authentically beyond this true eirenicism needs also to be in the frame—not harshly or in cantankerous terms—but for the very sake of the ideals of harmony themselves. We cannot well survive in a world where tears do not wait on truth, just as we cannot belong in a world where due exercise of power does not avail to keep disorder at bay. Maybe religions need each other precisely because of those contrasts by which they separately endure. These, however, are not in place as long as they are left to silence.

In this context, the word 'holistic' is often prominent, meaning an outlook that holds together the analytic rigors of science and the consecratory impulses of religion, via poetry, music and the arts. The Islamic truth of 'all things under God' is an obvious ally in every such concern, so long as we do not lose sight of how grievously prone are the lusts of 'commodity' to 'break faith' and violate the due sanctities.²⁹ There is a clear issue between religions around how amenable, or otherwise, our human nature is to the fine counsels we receive. The very prophethoods from which those fair visions of God-centeredness take their clarity and stake their claim were themselves, as we have seen, the prime targets of a rejecting enmity. If we would claim the world for a sacred purpose and a holy Lordship we must know it also as a crucifying place. For, manifestly, it is not holistic by dint of good advice.

The way of truth, as Plato saw, never moves in the world coercively, only persuasively. So too, the mind of the Qur'ān inasmuch as *lā ikrahā fi d-dīn* (S. 2:256): "No [absolute negation] compulsion of religion." There is no verb in the sentence. For 'is no' to have the meaning, we must read 'ought not to be.' The dictum is made good only when all forms of constraint, legal, social, popular or psychic, are disavowed and foregone. With that principle in place it becomes clear that all religions have great tasks with themselves, in that they erect structures of sanction, hidden coercion, dominance or mind-control which, even if meant to serve their ideals, contrive also to betray them. When this happens, in terms of ever 'letting God be God,' the world becomes the place where the image of 'the man of sorrows' appears anew.

That image, however, in no way means that the only course for realism is to deplore. Quite the contrary, it is to find for realism a livelier sense of divine resources in what is humanly at stake. The realm of ecology is a case in point. The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences has come into being during this decade. It obviously shares

²⁹ Quoting William Shakespeare, *King John*, Act 2, Sc. 1, line 598.

its concerns with non-Muslims. If these are fellow theists, they have in common the *khilāfa*/dominion, Qur'anic and biblical perception of humankind as enjoying a trustee's authority in and because of nature and the natural order.

At times, in the West and in Dār al-Islām, that has been interpreted as sheer mastery rather than liable trust-stewardship. Hence crude exploitation and chronic consumerism. It is urgent for us both to insist that every empire we enjoy—in land, development, energy, sexuality, productivity and commodity—belongs inside accountability to truth, justice and the will of God. We have mastery only to bring hallowing. The situation is one of the human for the divine, of the divine given magnanimously, into the human.

Though on dogmatic Muslim grounds, Christian Christology with its issue in the passion of Jesus is roundly disallowed, it is discovered enormously relevant in any pursuit of 'holism' in ecology. For, keeping to the adjectives 'divine' and 'human,'³⁰ faith in the Incarnation enshrines the principle Christians call sacramental. It makes a piece of history supremely sacramental of the divine, of 'God with us.' A sacrament does in act what a metaphor does in language, namely recruit from one realm to convey another so that both are fulfilled. Thus, when Shakespeare has a character say: "Well apparell'd April on the limping heel of winter treads" the sheer sequence of time takes on a magic from the imagery of a poet's mind. Language does this, kindling sense with the senses and having 'words take flesh.'

Likewise, it is with things discovered to be sacraments in history, in time and place where, as in deliberate drama, we take what is meant from what is done. As it is said in the theatre: 'Speech must move and action must speak.' So is 'the Word made flesh,' the divine in the human, the human for the divine, and neither in any hesitancy as if compromised but, instead, yielded into definitions that have been made mutually possible. It may be that Christian meanings which have always been vetoed by Islam as ever right for theology may be perceived via ecology.

For there also the physical and the spiritual co-inhere. What we transact in the laboratory, trade in the market, possess in the environment, or superintend in the state, is never mere commodity, sheer power, bare analysis, brute fact, or disposable wealth but, instead, a creaturely trust, a human privilege, a divine magnanimity meant for wholeness of meaning via gratitude and integrity of which we are the physical and mental sacrament.

³⁰ They are more readily comprehended in 'association' than the nouns 'God' and 'man,' just as 'substance' in the creed is more aptly 'Being' and 'acting.'

At once, even from ecology, we perceive how there is a cross in incarnation, a travail at the heart of the magnanimity that takes the human risk. For where that trusted mastery runs, we see the blight of violation, the curse of vulgar exploitation, the dishallowing of nature, sexuality, society and the sundry forms of inter-human commerce. The tragic side of the perceived sacrament of creation is evident in desecration of a violated earth. If we would hold with the trust we must be realist with the guilt. If there is hope of justice there is need of redemption. 'Holism' discovers there is Gethsemane. The prophets who tell us who we are register the burden that telling lays upon them. So then their tears belong in 'the book of God.'

It might be a right association to set this whole inter-religious theme of a divine-human ecology in the context of those inclusive questions in S. 56:57-70.

Have you considered what you do in intercourse [lit. 'What you spill]?
Is it you who do the creating, or We? . . . Have you considered the
soil you till. . . Have you considered the water you drink? . . . Have
you considered the fire you kindle?³¹

Here are all the elements of human dominion—progeny, tillage of the good earth, water and fire, all the arenas of *khalāfa* from the womb of birth to nuclear fission. In every case there is genuine empire to humans and in every case, too, an entire dependence on factors not our own to which we must defer as gifts of God. Ecology and theology come together in terms we all share. By Christian perception it follows from that ample bestowal into human privilege, and from how history stores it in review—there is a shape like a cross in its register with God.

V.

If, in the immediate foregoing, while mediating impartially between faiths in common, we have been looking through a Christian lens, it remains to fulfill a promised acknowledgment of Islam. May it be we should conclude that two great faiths serve to keep always in perspective a characteristic accent which, sensitively, the other needs to heed. That stance will not resolve all our tensions. It may at least set them in kinder light. If, as said, we cannot survive in a world where no love carries sins, a world

³¹ The 'consider' verb in each question *afā-ra'aitum* could be taken in the purely visual sense of 'Can you see' as with the naked eye. But the verb also means 'to have a view, or opinion, of.' Sperm, as such, is not visible and the question may imply that, whereas water, earth and fire are. In any event the conceptual is central to the point of the passage—and of high significance as a challenge to dimensions beyond science and technology alone.

where no one rejects violence or learns to be vicarious, a world where no one wills to suffer and forgive, a world where we cannot root these patterns in God Himself, in a word, a world without Christology and Christians in Christ, then, too, we cannot well survive in a world bereft of power-structure, of the means to order and some rule of law. If, in some measure, we have need of a faith born in Gethsemane, we may also salute a faith characterized in Hijra.

Let us, in conclusion, pursue that option in the name of reconciliation. There has been endless debate about the Prophet's Hijra from Mecca to Medina. Some outside Islam have read it as a departure from 'the essence' first enjoined on Muḥammad constantly as being his sole duty,³² an unhappy politicization in which Islam—and Muḥammad—declined from initial quality. The battle array, the raids, the confiscations, the inevitable tensions of confronting parties have seemed, on this count, a sad compromise of the old prophetic principle of Zechariah (4.6): "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts."³³ The messenger became the ruler, the Prophet in word the prophet armed and something irretrievably precious was forfeited.

It is possible to read the Hijra in other terms. It might even fit into a paradigm of 'exodus' and inspire some kind of liberation theology. It signals that power is an inescapable dimension and just as creaturehood enjoys it in being managerial, so state-authority employs it in being protective, structural and governmental. Even those Muslims who now insist that Islam should be, as first in Mecca, 'just a faith-religion,' foregoing power-pretension, still acknowledge a there-and-then legitimacy about the Hijra in the seventh century in the Hijāz. What, on this view, has ceased to be consonant with international law, minority rights and a modern ethos,³⁴ was appropriate in its own time and place.

Arab society, plagued with tribal feuding and a revenge culture, was yearning for some over-all authority. 'Months of truce' for pilgrims' sake, were a poor alternative to a pacification that ceased to need them. If Islam unified heaven by abolishing pseudo-gods, must it not likewise unify the tribes by imposing a power-order as a benison of *Tawḥīd* itself? If

³² In *ṣalāṭka illā al-balāgh* 'you have absolutely no liability except for giving the word,' recurs throughout the Meccan time and even beyond when Hijra and physical *jihād* are in being. See S. 3:20, 5:92, 13:40, 16:35, 24:54, 29:18, 36:17, 42:48, and 64:12. The reiteration is remarkable.

³³ When the addressee, Zerubbabel, was confronted with the daunting task of rehabilitating a fragile group of returning exiles, a sort of post-Hijra Jewish situation

³⁴ For an exposé of the idea of an essential, non-political Islam and how the demands of the twentieth century globally are in contrast to those of seventh century Arabia, see Abdullahi Ahmad an-Na'im, *Toward an Islamic Reformation Civil Liberties, Human Rights and International Law* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990; Cairo, 1992).

'sovereignty is Allāh's' why should God's Prophet not be the approved means to it?

Certainly it would seem that Muḥammad so read the logic, if not the summons, in his experience of verbal 'failure' in respect of any establishing of his mission against the vested interests of a pagan hegemony proving unpersuadable. His eventual success proved the vindication, as it seemed, of the policy that Hijra set on its way. Moral costs, indeed, there were as whenever arms take up a cause. There is a spiritual price to pay both for the ugly things that require doing and in the temptations of success. The Qurʾān knows well the *munāfiqūn*, the dissemblers who treacherously manipulated a winning cause.

All these aspects have been endlessly rehearsed in faith-controversies. What can emerge from them, with due caution, is the ever present, ever risk-prone dimension of politics and power, and their dubious partnership in human well-being. Not all come to power as Yūsuf/Joseph did by 'the iron in the soul,' through prison, patience and providence alone. The means of power can so darkly diabolise the ends. Yet it is legitimate to read in the Hijra a pattern of emancipation, self-help, venture and attainment of a goal. In those terms much contemporary Muslim ideology reads its pivotal story of 622 C.E. whence the calendar derives the centuries of Islam.³⁵

Christendom, ever since Constantine, has paid the tribute of imitation to the *regio-religio* of which Islam, from its very founding time, has been the supreme exemplar. Yet there has always been, latent if not active, for Christianity the entirely different powerless pattern of its origins in Jesus as the Christ. Perhaps it is the vocation of Islam among the religions to represent the indispensability of the power dimension in human affairs and in the will, however precarious, to subdue those affairs to the authority which is God's alone. That authority has never been theocratic. Were it so there would be no point in prophethood, nor in *humanitas*-in-deputy.

The divine sovereignty has always somehow to be 'proxified,' in the sense that the exercise of power in every polis will, like all else in creation, be an *amāna*, an entrustment, to hold and administer what is ascribed as of right to Allāh alone, while committed into human hands.

We might say that it was the genius of Islam, in the fact and symbol of its Hijra into Medinan politicization, to have grasped this truth and effectuated it in its venture after 'all things under God.' Such vindication, however, if we read it well, must by the same token be balanced by another

³⁵ As, for example, does the Moroccan writer, M. A. Lahbabi in *Le Personnalisme Musulman* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), interpreting the *muhājirūn* as exercising an individual purpose against tribal bonds and so affirming a religious liberation

truth, a truth that Christianity has at the heart of its Gethsemane. It is that power will always pass into guilt, will always over-reach itself, always foul its ends by its means, and always tend to demand a false absolution in the interest of its own perpetuation. That being so, it will always need alongside its pride and its assurance the witness of a faith born of the God of wounds, the wounds of power's excess and folly.

When the Convention People's Party in Ghana developed its independence campaign, which made it the first successful African occasion of de-colonization, its leader, Kwame Nkrumah, adapted the slogan: "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things will be added to you."³⁶ That sentiment might also be thought to capture the sense of Muḥammad's Hijra. As phrased in Ghana in the fifties the insertion of the adjective meant the elision of the 'righteousness.' If power does not exceed itself, it will be likely at all events to invite retaliation. It will short-circuit the justice it is assumed to serve. It must inevitably make enemies in being in necessarily particular hands.³⁷ It may revert to being monolatrous, whatever its theology, if the One God it invokes comes to be held its exclusive champion and patron against the humankind it excludes from its belief system.³⁸

All these, and many more, will be its temptations. Yet temptations are inseparable from legitimacy itself. Religion cannot withdraw from all that political power has in hand in the ordering and governing of the world. So much Islam's Hijra tells. Yet, in *not* withdrawing, a faith will always be endangering the more ultimate service owed to the transcendent Lord. For that reason, it is well the world should have, for due witness, the faith that enquires of God concerning the tears of His prophets and reads them as pointing to a cross of His own at the heart of His creation.

Oxford, UK

KENNETH CRAGG



³⁶ See Nkrumah's *Autobiography* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1957), 164, changing Matthew 6.33.

³⁷ A 'cause' that is forcibly espoused against others—unlike non-violence—is bound to have them for 'enemies' and so only operates by dint of alienation. The style of *Amir al-mu'minin*, 'Amir of the Believers,' adopted by Caliph 'Umar after the *rida*, or revolt, that occurred under Abū Bakr, is significant here. It is explained that *mu'minin* would unify all, the ever loyal and the erstwhile rebels who came back to the ranks, whereas *amir al-muslimin* with the term 'submitters' (*muslimūn*) could be seen as discriminating against those whose 'submission' had been in question. After their re-accession to the cause *al-mu'minin* embraced all. A similar distinction between 'believing' and only 'submitting' comes in S. 49:14.

³⁸ 'Monolatry' means 'one god for one people' by a rubric 'Have no other gods but me.' If this is reciprocal to 'I will have no other people but you' it is not monotheism. The unity of God must belong with the unity of humankind as included in one sovereignty and one equal compassion. Yet wrongly affirming monotheism may bring us round again to a sort of monolatry if, for example, we are crying *Allāhu akbar* for our own collective identity.

THE NUMINOUS IN THE QUR'ĀN: AN ASSESSMENT OF RUDOLF OTTO'S VIEW OF ISLAM*

Rudolf Otto [1869-1937] was one of the most influential theoreticians of religion of this century. His theology remains an important corrective to the European rationalism of the nineteenth century which sought to reduce religion and the sacred to a moral idea.¹ The breadth and depth of his erudition as a student of both Indian and Semitic religious traditions, as well as Eastern and Western Christianity, has made him one of the few truly interreligious theologians of our time.

Otto's thought combines deep personal piety and academic integrity in a unique way. Yet Otto was a child of his time. Like Schopenhauer and other German-speaking philosophers, poets and composers of the nineteenth century, he held a romantic interest in the Aryan cultures and religions of India and Iran, combined with a critical disdain towards Islam as a Semitic religion. This attitude is discernible to an extent in his characterization of YHWH as the stern and irrational Semitic god of Moses, in contrast with the universal and compassionate god of the prophets. Allāh, the God of Islam, is for Otto "mere numen, precisely YHWH in his pre-Mosaic form. . . ."²

In this essay we shall first examine Otto's encounter with and attitude towards Islam. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the basic principles of his theology and their application to a mystical understanding of the Qur'ān. We shall, in light of these principles, study in some detail the mystical vision of Muḥammad as presented in the first 18 verses of Sura 53. Central to Muḥammad's mystical experience as reported in this sura is his night journey from Makkah to Jerusalem and from its 'blessed place of worship' to heaven. In fact, the two experiences are often woven by popular piety into a single dramatic mystical vision. In our study of Muḥammad's mystical vision as reported in S. 53, we shall make repeated reference to his Night Journey, which includes the ascent (*mi'rāj*) to heaven to the Throne of God.

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¹ Joel R. Ryce-Menuhin, ed., *Jung and Monotheism: Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (London: Routledge, 1994), 20.

² Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 75.

I. Rudolf Otto and Islam

Otto's first encounter with Islam was with Sufis in Egypt, where he was shocked by the mercenary use of popular Sufi ceremonies. Although he traveled extensively in the Muslim world, this initial encounter with Islam determined his attitude towards it for the rest of his life. The central defect of Islam for Otto was that it subordinates the rational element of religion to the non-rational. Based on this narrow and erroneous judgment, Otto had little empathy for Islam.³

Because of overemphasis on the numinous in Islam, Otto avers, God's holy will is simply a capricious and despotic power, which can never be gain said, let alone placated. This, in Otto's view, is absolute predestination which renders the rational and moral elements in religion at best fortuitous. Thus he argues that in Islam the rational and moral aspects of the idea of God could never attain the primary role they did in Christianity and Judaism.

Unfortunately, Otto does not objectively deal with the fact that the issue of free-will and predestination is central to all monotheistic faiths. It is central not only to the Old and New Testaments, but to the theology of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, among others. Nor is God's holy and inexorable will any less capricious in the theology of Luther and Calvin than it is in Islam. Furthermore, the sacred law of Islam (*shari'a*), as enshrined in the Qur'an and Prophetic tradition, is not a system of laws but of moral imperatives which is meant to regulate the socio-political and religious lives of pious Muslims everywhere. Otto nonetheless states that:

when Islam is criticized for giving a merely 'fortuitous' character to the claim of morality, as though the moral law were only valid through the chance caprice of the deity, the criticism is well justified. . .⁴

This, Otto concludes, "will account for what is commonly called the fanatical character of this religion."⁵

This judgment was apparently based on the popular Sufi ecstatic *dhikr* (devotional ceremonies) which Otto observed among the dervishes of Egypt. On the basis of this limited observation, he characterized Islam as a religion dominated by a frenzy "untempered by the more rational elements of religious experience. . . ."⁶ No doubt Otto knew well that charismatic movements exist in every religious community, and that they cannot be used as a criterion by which an entire religious tradition can be judged.

³ Philip C. Almond, *Rudolf Otto: an Introduction to his Philosophical Theology* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 12-13

⁴ Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*: 90-91.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁶ *Ibid.*

It is also difficult to see how such disparate theological notions as predestinarianism, irrationality and fortuitous morality follow from one another to form a sweeping characterization of Islam as a fanatical religion.

Although free-will and predestination were among the most hotly debated issues in Islamic theology, what is often perceived as rigid Sufi predestinarianism is not a theological concept, but an expression of absolute trust (*tawakkul*) in God. But trust in God is only the first station on the long and arduous spiritual journey, which begins with repentance, or resolutely turning (*inābah*) to God and ends in love of and total annihilation (*fanā'*) of the self in God. When the traveler reaches the station of annihilation to all things but God, God grants him or her the grace of subsistence (*baqā'*) in Him. Between resigned trust and annihilation, there are the stations of patience or steadfastness (*ṣabr*), thankfulness or praise (*shukr*), and contentment or willing acceptance (*riḍā*) with God's decrees, be they good or ill. These lead further to the higher stations of nearness or proximity (*qurb*), love (*maḥabba*), longing (*shawq*) and pleasant companionship (*uns*) with the beloved. In these stations (*maqāmāt*) and their accompanying psychological states (*aḥwāl*), the mystic experiences the numinous in both its terrible or majestic (*jalāl*) and gracious or beautiful (*jamāl*)⁷ aspects. This spiritual journey to God concretely typifies the basic elements of the numinous feeling: moral awe or fear of God, as well as emotional fascination and devotional love for Him.

II. Otto's Theology and Qur'anic Mysticism

Otto begins his discussion of the 'Holy' by sharply contrasting the rational and non-rational elements in religious consciousness. On the one hand, he argues, characteristics such as infinite reason and wisdom, goodness and purpose, omnipotence, unity and personality are essential attributes of the deity in any theistic conception of God. On the other hand, God's ways are beyond the capacities of human knowledge and reason. It may therefore be argued that the contrast between the rational and non-rational in our conception of God is due to the great divine paradox of mercy and justice, forgiveness and retribution, and love and wrath, to name only a few divine attributes. For in God alone is the *coincidentia oppositorum*—which is so crucial to monotheistic faith—truly manifested.

Two divine attributes are essential to the Qur'anic concept of God: absolute oneness (*tawḥīd*) and absolute transcendence (*tanẓīh*). These are, however, not mere philosophical or theological concepts, but expressions of faith through worship. Hence, the sura which affirms God's

⁷ For a discussion of these states and stations, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 109-30.

oneness and transcendence is known as *sūrat al-ikhlāṣ*, the sura of sincere faith. This brief sura constitutes the creed of Islam. It reads:

Say, "God (*Allāh*), He is the unique one (*aḥad*). God is the eternal refuge. He did not beget, nor was He begotten. Nor is there anyone equal to Him."⁸

Otto's concept of the Numen in all its aspects can be clearly discerned in these two divine attributes: absolute oneness and transcendence. In His transcendence, God is the "wholly/holy other," but in His oneness, He is the God who is nearer to every human being "than his jugular vein" (S. 50:16). In His essence, God is unapproachable and unknowable majesty. But in His attributes of love, mercy and sovereign will, He is immanent in His creation. In the course of instituting the onerous fast of Ramadan, God declares, "If my servants ask you (Muḥammad) about me, say I am near; I answer the prayer of him who calls upon me. . . ."⁹

The three basic aspects of the feeling evoked by the holy or divine in Otto's theology, namely mystery, awesome dread and inexplicable fascination, are graphically expressed in God's 'most beautiful names' which constitute the essential framework of the theology of the Qur'ān. God is the King (*al-mālik*); the Holy (*al-quddūs*); the Peace (*al-salām*), the Faithful (*al-mu'min*); the Controller (*al-muḥayyim*); the Sublime (*al-ʿazīz*), the Mighty (*al-jabbār*); the Ever-exalted (*al-mutakabbir*), the Maker (*al-bārī*) and the Fashioner (*al-muṣawwir*). But the names by which God is most often invoked are *al-rahīmān* (the All-merciful) and *al-rahīm* (the Compassionate).¹⁰

Kingship, holiness, absolute might and control are attributes of power and majesty; these manifest the *tremendum* in God. Mercy and compassion, peace, faithfulness, creation and fashioning are attributes of beauty and grace; these manifest divine mystery, and thus evoke fascination

Other divine attributes central to both the Qur'anic and Biblical theology and world view are wisdom, absolute freedom of action, and justice. God is "the Sublime [in power], the Wise", the Qur'ān asserts.¹¹ He is the "All-forgiving and Loving [Lord], Doer of whatever He wills (S. 85:14 and 16)." These and other similar divine attributes inevitably raise the ques-

⁸ All Qur'anic translations are mine. This sura (112) is often recited in prayers and personal devotions.

⁹ S. 2:186. This is a recurrent theme in the Qur'ān, see for example S. 27:62, 3:193 and 40:60.

¹⁰ S. 59:23-24. After recounting these names, the passage under discussion declares "to Him belong the beautiful names." For a list of God's 99 beautiful names see Arthur Jeffery, *Islam Muhammad and his Religion* (Indianapolis Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), 93-98.

¹¹ The Qur'anic passage affirming the above cited attributes ends with the assertion, "All that is in the heavens and the earth hymn His glory, for He is the Sublime [in power], the Wise" (S. 59:24).

tion of Job: why does God allow the righteous to suffer unjustly and the wicked to prosper?

The answer to this question could end either in silent resignation before the awesome majesty of God, or in calm acceptance of the inscrutable, but infinitely wise, Will of the Creator. The first is the biblical answer to Job's rightful complaint. Job was not answered; he was simply overwhelmed. In the end he was not vindicated, but only rewarded for his steadfastness in the face of unbearable suffering and the mental agony inflicted on him by his supposed comforters.

In contrast, the Qur'anic Job is an exemplary mystic who calmly accepts the Will of God. He is portrayed not as a rebel against God's incomprehensible decree, but as a devoted servant fully dependent on God's mercy and wisdom: "What an excellent servant [is Job], for he is oft returning (*ar-rāḥib*) [to God]."¹² Job's suffering, moreover, is not a test of his steadfastness, but of his faith. It must be seen as a divine test of faith with which God tries His faithful servants, as God declares:

We shall surely try you with some measure of fear and hunger and decrease of wealth, lives, and crops. But give glad tidings to those who are patient. Those who, when visited by affliction, say, "Surely to God do we belong and to Him shall we return." (S. 2:155-56).

In accord with this Qur'anic view of suffering, Job raised in the depths of despair and pain an inward cry to his Lord: "Hurt has surely touched me, and you are most merciful."¹³

The feeling of utter humility which Job manifested as God challenged him from the whirlwind¹⁴ (that which Otto calls "creature feeling"¹⁵) represents at best a lower type of mysticism. This is because it is a mysticism of fear, not of love. Although indirect, still far more mystical and devotionally moving, we believe, is the Qur'anic answer to Job's question. Here the divine challenge is couched not in words denoting God's infinite power, but His infinite teleological wisdom and love. Thus the Qur'anic passage in question begins as a doxological hymn: "Say, all praise be to God, and peace be upon His servants whom he elected; is God better or those that they associate with Him?" The elect of God mentioned in this verse are His prophets and intimate friends (*ar-rāḥib*'), who are the guides of humanity on the straight way to God.

¹² S. 38:44 The Qur'an here uses an interesting word play. The Arabic name Ayyūb [Job] is derived from the tri-lateral root *ayw/b*, hence the epithet *ar-rāḥib*, "oft returning."

¹³ S. 21:83; see also S. 38:41.

¹⁴ See Job 38 for this remarkable confrontation between divine majesty and human helplessness; see also the following note.

¹⁵ See Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 8-11; and for his analysis of Job, 77-80

The next two verses of this truly mystical passage stress God's providential wisdom in His creation:

Or who created the heavens and earth and sends down for you from the sky water by means of which we caused to grow orchards with radiant beauty, whose trees you yourselves could not cause to sprout up; is there any god beside God? Rather they are people who turn aside [from the right way]. Or who made the earth a place of repose and made rivers to flow through it? He made for it bulwarks [i.e. mountains], and placed between the two oceans [that is between the sweet and salty waters] a barrier. Is there any god beside God? But most of them know not.

The final three verses emphasize God's nurturing mercy towards His human creatures and His readiness to answer their cry for help:

Or who answers the supplication of a person in dire straits when he calls upon Him and removes the hurt? Or who has made you stewards of the earth? Is there any god beside God? Little do you remember. Or who guides you in the dark places of land and sea, and who sends the wind as glad tidings before his nurturing mercy? Is there any god beside God? Exalted be He above all that they associate with Him. Or who initiates the creation, and then repeats it yet another time? Or who provides for you sustenance from the sky and the earth? Is there any god beside God? Say, "Bring your proof if you are truthful." (S.27: 59-64).

We have quoted this passage in full for its lyrical beauty, as well as its dramatic presentation of the mystical theology of the Qur'an. Through their nature imagery and devotional language, these verses evoke powerful feelings of utter humility before the majesty of the All-wise and All-powerful God, but also feelings of fascination with His mercy and love.

In contrast with the divine tribunal before which Job could not stand, and thus cried out, "... now I see you with my own eyes. Therefore I yield, repenting in dust and ashes,"¹⁶ the Qur'an presents its argument for God's oneness, providential will and absolute sovereignty in a magnificent hymn of praise and adoration. In language and idiom this Qur'anic hymn is more akin to the Psalms than to Job's questioning discourses. It may be that the ultimate answer to Job's suffering should be sought in such hymns of adoration like the psalms rather than in theological or philosophical arguments. It is noteworthy that the mysticism of the Psalms receives little attention from Otto.

¹⁶ Job 42.6 (Oxford Revised)

The four instances of numinous vision on which Otto largely bases his philosophical theology are the encounters of Moses with YHWH, Isaiah's Temple vision of God (Isa. 6), Job's confrontation with God and Ezekiel's vision of the divine throne (Ezek. 1). Although all four visions have a clear moral tone and purpose, they are anthropomorphic and predominantly numinous in character.

Muḥammad's vision as presented in the Qur'ān, in contrast, is not a vision of God, but of God's "great signs" or manifestations in His wondrous celestial creation. Yet despite this important difference, there is in both Bible and Qur'ān an element of real tension between the exoteric and reified historical encounter with the divine and an inward personal vision of God's manifestations. This tension is central to the exegetical tradition of Muḥammad's mystical vision, to which we shall now turn.

III. Muḥammad's Mystical Vision

Like the Bible, the Qur'ān is not a book about mysticism, nor is it a mystical book. Nevertheless, mystics have throughout Muslim history found deeper esoteric truths behind its exoteric and literal meanings. Such verses as the Throne Verse (S.2:255), the Light Verse (S.24:35) and the above quoted verses are mystical in both language and imagery. But verses 1-18 of S. 53, "The Star," present the only actual and truly mystical vision in the Qur'ān. Because Muḥammad's night journey has been the subject of a vast pietistic literature, we can only treat it in the exegetical context of S. 53 which is the main subject of this study.

We shall consider the mystical vision of the Prophet Muḥammad as presented in S. 53 and as interpreted by three representative and well-known Sufi commentators. They are Sahl b. 'Abd Allāh al-Tustarī [d. 896], Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī [d. 1074] and Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī [d. 1240]. These commentators represent not only different periods of the classical exegetical tradition, but different mystical approaches and temperaments as well.

Sahl al-Tustarī is an important esoteric commentator who lived during the formative period of Islamic mysticism. Qushayrī was a noted thinker whose treatise (*risāla*) remains one of the classics among the manuals of Sufism of the eleventh century. Ibn 'Arabī is the most creative and influential theosophical mystic of all times. The Qur'ān commentary that bears his name was most likely written by his disciple 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī. It nonetheless is a good exposition of his thought.

Although the verses presenting the Prophet Muḥammad's vision cannot be dated with certainty, the vision itself seems to be directly related to his revelation experience. As he sat meditating in a lonely cave on Mount Ḥirā', he was visited by an apparition, later identified as Gabriel, the an-

gel of revelation, who announced to Muḥammad his prophetic mission and revealed to him the first verses of the Qur'ān. Later, tradition has it, as the Prophet wandered aimlessly among the hills surrounding Makkah trying to understand this supernatural experience, Gabriel would appear to him seated on a throne and filling the horizon.

The verses under discussion appear to portray different episodes of this angelic vision. Because of their economy of words, their dramatic and elliptical language and subtle allusions to much more than what the words say, these verses have been a rich subject for diverse mystical ideas and interpretations. The Prophet himself does not speak; rather his vision is narrated in the third person:

1. By the star when it plunges [or sets]; 2. Your companion [Muḥammad] has not gone astray, nor has he erred. 3. Nor does he speak out of capricious desire; 4. Rather it is a revelation revealed. 5. One mighty in powers taught him—7. Possessed of great strength, as he sat upright. 8. He was on the highest horizon. 9. Then he drew near and stood suspended—10. So that he was the distance of two bows or nearer. 11. Thus did He [God] reveal to His servant what He revealed. 12. [Muḥammad's] innermost heart did not belie what it saw. 13. Would you then dispute with him concerning what he saw? 14. He indeed saw him yet another time by the lote tree of the outermost boundary. 15. By it is the garden of abode—16. When the lote tree was enveloped with whatever enveloped it. 17. [His] sight did not swerve, nor did it transgress. 18. He indeed saw some of his Lord's greatest signs.

Sahl al-Tustarī was one of the earliest mystical commentators to interpret these verses. Since his commentary is so brief and so removed from the apparent sense of the verses, we shall quote it at some length:

"By the star when it plunges" means Muhammad when he returned from heaven. "He did not stray" from the reality of divine oneness in any way, nor did he ever follow Satan. Nor did he ever utter vain words. "Then he [Muḥammad] drew near and stood suspended," that is he drew nearer and still nearer [to God]. "[His] innermost heart did not belie" his striving to see his Lord with the sight of his heart. "He indeed saw Him [that is God] yet another time," that is in primordial time when God created him. It has been also said that [it was when he was] a light in the divine pillar of light¹⁷ a thousand thousand years before the beginning of creation. [Then Muḥammad saw God] with the instincts of faith, a revelation of the unknown in the unknown.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the motif of the "pillar of light" see Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 149-50 and 153-54.

Tustarī then identifies the lote tree as, "A heavenly tree at which the knowledge of everyone stops." The lote tree was enveloped by the pearls of the light of Muḥammad, looking like golden butterflies. These pearls, or golden butterflies represent divine wonders which God grants Muḥammad as rewards for his great devotions.

Tustarī comments on verse 17 as follows:

Muḥammad's sight did not incline to the visible qualities (*shawāhid*) of his self or to gazing upon it. Rather, he was in all his faculties beholding his Lord. He was witness to the divine attributes that were made manifest to him, and which granted him firmness in that place.

Mystical and popular piety in general ascribed many supernatural miracles and personal characteristics to the Prophet Muḥammad in order to elevate him above all the prophets who preceded him. Typically of this mystical piety, even at such an early stage of Muslim history, Tustarī says:

[His Lord's greatest signs] are the divine attributes, which are God's great signs, and which Muḥammad beheld, yet did not turn away from his object of witnessing [that is God Himself], nor did he abandon the proximity of his true object of worship. All this only increased him in love and longing [for Him] and in power. God gave him great strength to bear the divine manifestation (*tajallī*) and great divine lights. All this God bestowed upon him as a favor over all other prophets.¹⁸

The Qur'ān often uses an oath to show the gravity or importance of what is to follow. Therefore the star here refers either to the polar star which the Arabs used as a guide in their travels, as in S.16:16, or to a star in heaven. In fact the Qur'ān elsewhere swears by the "stations of the stars," declaring that it is "a grave oath" (S. 56:75). The tradition interpreting the star to refer to Muḥammad and his heavenly journey (*mirāj*) is related on the authority of the Sixth Shī'ī Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq who was also one of the early authorities of Sufi thought. Nevertheless, this interpretation is not warranted by the literal meaning of the text.

The great Sufi master al-Qushayrī expresses similar sentiments in his commentary on the Prophet's mystical vision. But while Tustarī limits his exegesis to the Prophet's vision and his status with God, Qushayrī sees Muḥammad as the focus of divine gnosis which God grants to all His friends (*awliyā'*). Thus on one level the star here refers to Muḥammad and his return from heaven to earth. But on another level of meaning it refers to

¹⁸ Abū Muḥammad Sahl b. 'Abd Allāh al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-qur'ān al-'aṣim* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya al-Kubrā, n.d.), 95.

"The light of the hearts of the gnostics and the stars of the intellects of spiritual seekers."¹⁹

Qushayrī reads the verse, "Then he drew near. . . ." to mean Muḥammad drew near and stood suspended in the attitude of prostration before God. One of the most controversial theological issues in early Islam was the question of whether God can be seen by the people of faith with their physical eyes. As a strictly orthodox theologian/jurist, Qushayrī avoids this issue altogether. He therefore interprets the verse "and he saw him yet another time" to mean that Gabriel, who accompanied Muḥammad on his heavenly journey, saw God yet another time when Muḥammad was by the lote tree. Qushayrī interprets the final verse to mean that Muḥammad saw his Lord inwardly on the night of the *mī'rāj*, and that was "his Lord's greatest sign." He says:

It was his subsistence (*baqa*) in the state of meeting with His Lord God thus preserved him in the state of sobriety (*sahw*) until he saw Him.²⁰

Ibn 'Arabī, the "Great Shaykh," interprets the entire passage in light of his unique theosophical system. Thus the "star" means the Muḥammadan soul in the state of complete annihilation in God. In this state, "The Messenger of God drew near to God and rose above the station of Gabriel through annihilation in the unity (*waḥdah*) [of being] and the elevation above the station of the great Spirit."²¹ Gabriel could not approach this station; he exclaimed: "Were I to come closer even the span of one finger, I would be consumed, for beyond my station there is nothing except annihilation and burning."

Ibn 'Arabī interprets the words "and stood suspended" to mean "He [Muḥammad] inclined towards the direction of humanness through turning from the Truth [*al-haqq*, which is God] to the creation [*al-khalq*]." The "two bows distance" is interpreted by Ibn 'Arabī to signify "the measure of the circle of being (*wujūd*) which contains all things, and which is divided by an imaginary line into two bows, signifying the Truth [God] and the creation." Thus the two bows here are God, the eternal and unchanging, and the creation which is annihilated to its own essence in the essence (*dhāt*) of God.²²

¹⁹ al-Qushayrī, *Lata'if al-Isharat* ed Ibrāhīm Basyūnī, 4 vols (Cairo, 1390/1970) 4: 48

²⁰ *Ibid.* 49-52 Qushayrī refers here first to the station of subsistence which God grants the mystic when he attains complete annihilation (*fanā*) in God, and secondly to the state of sobriety which follows the state of intoxication (*sukr*).

²¹ The great Spirit (*al-rūh*) is mentioned along with the angels and regarded as greater than them all. See S 70:4 and S 97:4

²² Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī, *Taṣṣūt al-qutub al-karīm* ed Mustāfā Ghālib, 2nd ed., 2 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1978) 2: 553-55

Ibn 'Arabī interprets the words "He indeed saw him" (v. 15.) to mean that Muḥammad saw Gabriel in his true angelic form. The words, "yet another time" mean, "at the time of his return from the Truth and descent to the station of the spirit." Ibn 'Arabī locates the lote tree in the seventh heaven. It represents the end of the stations of Paradise, and it is the abode of the spirits of the martyrs. It is "enveloped" by the majesty of God and His greatness. Ibn 'Arabī continues:

He [Muḥammad] saw the lote tree with the eye of God at the time of his being made real by true being. He thus saw the Truth manifested in its form. The lote tree was enveloped by the divine manifestation (*tajallī*), which hid and annihilated it.²³

Ibn 'Arabī only uses the Qur'anic text to elaborate his own theosophy. He does not speculate on the "great signs" or sign which Muḥammad saw as the culmination of his mystical vision, but identifies "the great sign" with God's great attribute of universal mercy (*rahmānīya*) which contains all the divine attributes, as well as God's greatest name. In this sense, Muḥammad did see God in His manifestations in all created beings, which are in reality a unity of being in God.²⁴

In the Qur'ān Muḥammad makes no claims to miracles or any supernatural qualities. When challenged to support his claim to prophethood with miracles he protested: "Glory be to my Lord, am I but a mortal man, a messenger" (S. 17:93). Yet many miracles and even divine characteristics have been ascribed to him by popular piety. Most important of these is his mystical vision of God's greatest signs, and even of God Himself.

IV. Conclusion

Rudolf Otto's analysis of the "holy" constitutes a landmark in the scientific study of religion. The originality of his ideas was quickly recognized as his book *The Idea of the Holy* was translated into many languages soon after its appearance, thus becoming a classic in religious studies. His tragic death only two decades after the book's publication cut short what might have been a most fruitful academic debate.

The significance of Otto's ideas lies in their universal application to all religious phenomena, from crude animistic beliefs and rituals of the primal traditions to the most sublime mystical theologies of the higher religions. Although the elements of mystery, fear and fascination are observable in all religious rituals, their actual operations in the lives of religious men and women raise many issues which Otto did not have the

²³ *Ibid.*, 557.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 557-58

opportunity to deal with. Another important problem which Otto did not address is the applicability of these elements to the broad theological systems and world views of the higher monotheistic religions, where folk religion must be clearly distinguished from theology and dogma.

The purpose of this study has been to examine this problem with regard to Islam, and more specifically with regard to the Qur'ān and the mystical vision of the Prophet Muḥammad. It is hoped that we have succeeded in pointing out some of the possibilities and problems involved.

While Otto convincingly argues for the presence of these elements in the conception of the "holy" in the Bible and subsequent Christian tradition, he fails to do so for Islam. The reason, we believe, is not that Islam is under-developed Judaism and Christianity; it is rather due to either Otto's lack of understanding of Islam or his conscious prejudice against it. We tried to demonstrate in this essay that the characteristics of the "Numen" or the holy as Otto explained them are indeed found in Islam, and not in a primitive but highly developed theological and mystical form.

What is absent in Islam is the "demonic" and its "demonic manifestations." To be sure, they do exist in Muslim societies as folk beliefs and customs which belong to culture rather than religious belief and practice. The Qur'anic account of the encounter of Moses with God is not a confrontation with a demonic power,²⁵ but a meeting with a moral judge, merciful and just, possessed of a providential will and purpose. Hence fear of God in the Qur'ān is not "demonic dread" but righteous fear (*taqīwā*). It is finally this relationship with God who is at once transcendent and immanent, forgiving and severe in punishment, merciful and just, that allowed for the rise of a rich mystical tradition. It is a mysticism based on faith in the One God, fear of His wrath and hope in His mercy.

Temple University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

MAHMOUD M. AYOUB



²⁵ Cf. Exod. 4. 24-26, which Otto presents as a powerful illustration of YHWH in his primitive animistic form.

MIND AND HEART AT THE SERVICE OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING: LOUIS MASSIGNON AS TRAIL BLAZER

The advent of Mary Louise Gude's biography in English: *Louis Massignon: the Crucible of Compassion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), offered an opportune moment to celebrate the explorations of this profound and enigmatic figure, as well as to mine his contributions to Christian-Muslim understanding as a guide for our endeavors today. So together with Mary Louise and with Herbert Mason and Sidney Griffith, we planned a conference on Louis Massignon: "The Vocation of a Scholar" for the University of Notre Dame in October 1997.¹ We had hoped to have Roger Arnaldez as our keynote speaker, in the wake of his recently translated *Three Messengers for One God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), but he did not feel up to a transatlantic junket, so we were heartened when Jacques Waardenburg, whose work on the pioneers in this domain—Goldziher, Hurgonje, Becker, MacDonald and Massignon—has been an invaluable resource for students (*L'Islam dans le Miroir de l'Occident* [Paris: Mouton, 1962]), graciously acceded to our request. For these two scholars represent an immediate harvest of the perspectives which Louis Massignon brought to intercultural understanding, and together provide a bridge for the next two generations of students of Islam, who were represented at our gathering. As Herbert Mason's monumental translation of Massignon's *chef d'oeuvre: The Passion of al-Hallāj* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982) testifies, Islamic studies has enjoyed a great deal of sophistication since the turn of the century, so that Massignon's notoriously sketchy footnotes can now be fleshed out with published manuscripts and with a relative abundance of translations into western languages. Yet the very exploratory character of his writings, and indeed of his often enigmatic prose, continues to draw from us something which mere scholarship can never do: a glimpse of the *spirit* which animated these classical works. And it is the Spirit which must also animate cross-cultural understanding, and especially Christian-Muslim understanding, as Massignon continues to remind us.

¹ Papers from the conference will be revised in the light of the discussion, and edited by Mary Louise Gude for publication in 1999 under the conference title by University of Notre Dame Press

And it was that spirit—his spirit with the Spirit of Jesus and of al-Hallāj—which took over the four days at Notre Dame, transforming them from a conference to something more like a retreat. Allow me to spell out that alchemy, beginning with the centerpiece of the gathering, and then offering (in the fashion of Georges Anawati's *comptes rendus* in MIDEO) an overview of the papers presented. Four students who had spent the previous semester in Jerusalem were coached by Albert Duclos to render a dramatic reading of Herbert Mason's verse drama *The Death of al-Hallaj* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), which had been first presented in a concert reading at Harvard's Center for World Religions in 1974 with the author, Albert Duclos, James Malcolm, and Annemarie Schimmel in the four principal roles. Here it formed a dramatic dénouement of two days of papers, followed by a Sunday morning focus on Christian spirituality, crowned by John S. Dunne, C.S.C. presiding at the Divine Liturgy. The spirit of Massignon had been present from the outset, certainly, selecting those who responded to the initial call for papers, and taking over immediately upon the arrival of participants from Jordan, Syria, Egypt, France and across the United States. Held in a completely bi-lingual fashion in the University's Center for Continuing Education, the two days of presentations had been organized into five groupings, allowing us to explore Massignon as man and scholar, regarding the study of Islam, his reception in the Arab world, his appreciation of Sufism, and his role in interfaith dialogue.

The initial session focused on the person, with his American biographer M-L. Gude detailing his relations with Huysmans, his son Daniel speaking of his formative years, François L'Yvonnet presenting the role of La Salette in his life and work, and Jean Moncelon tracing the role which spirituality played in Massignon's own life. Moving to his place in the study of Islam, Daud Rahbar offered reflections on the way in which the Qur'ān was mediated to Massignon by al-Hallāj, Vincenzo Poggi explored his epistolary friendship with Paul Molla, the Cretan Turk who converted to Catholicism during his study of philosophy with Maurice Blondel in Aix-en-Provence, Christian Destremau traced the lineaments of his role as titular Professor of Sociology and Sociography of Islam in the Collège de France, and Yann Richard offered some startling perspectives on the Iranian Islamist thinker Ali Shari'ati as a follower of Massignon. With regard to his reception in the Arab world, Alan Christelow probed the vexing relations between colonial domination and trust among Algerian Muslim intellectuals, and Edouard Metenier traced the reception of Massignon's writings among his Egyptian contemporaries. Regarding his appreciation of Sufism, Amira el-Zein explored the lineaments of "the Other in Massignon's spirituality," using tools borrowed from contemporary philosophical appreciation of the subject, while Patrick Laude extended a theme

dear to Massignon: sacred geography and ecumenical space, focusing on Ephesus, Isé (Japan), and Jerusalem. David Pinault displayed how Massignon's work has influenced his extensive research into Shī'a Islam in the Asian subcontinent, noting particularly how his perspectives have aided in teaching Islam to undergraduate students. Françoise Jacquin initiated the session on interfaith dialogue by detailing how decisively conversations Massignon had with his theological contemporaries had altered their perspectives on this topic—perspectives to be given voice in the Vatican Council document *Nostra Aetate*. Sidney Griffith showed how the extensive correspondence between Massignon and Thomas Merton had opened American Catholics especially to inter-religious dialogue. Pierre Rocalve analyzed the prolonged discussion between Massignon and Louis Gardet on the then-vexing issue of natural or supernatural mysticism, while André de Peretti drew out the spiritual implications of Massignon's initiatives in fostering the *Comité Chrétien d'Entente France-Islam*, notably in the acrimonious atmosphere surrounding the prolonged Algerian conflict. Gerhard Böwering culminated this session with reflections on the "Badaliyya" at the threshold of the new millennium, querying whether we are not now called to move from substitution to solidarity. In the valedictory session on Christian spirituality, Rita George helped us to "see with new eyes the story of the 'Seven Sleepers'," Dorothy Buck sounded the theme of "le point vierge" in his writings, and David Burrell mined the *Eranos Jahrbücher* to find affinities between Massignon and Carl Jung.

Massignon's Interfaith Journey

Allow me to exploit that affinity in approach and attitudes between Massignon and Jung as a vehicle for assessing this gathering and the perspectives of Louis Massignon more generally. It was hardly accidental that Massignon chose to participate in a total of ten Eranos conferences at Ascona from 1936 to 1955. The venue was obviously to his liking, interfaith as well as bridging with those of no faith at all, yet all engaged in approaching their sources for mutual understanding and nourishment of the spirit. Indeed, no spirit could have been further from the intellectual climate of the Collège de France than that of Eranos, so that any attempt to understand Massignon's writings must begin by recalling the intensely positivistic orientation of any academic inquiry during the first half of this century, and marvel at the daunting task which Massignon's own research posed for him: to elaborate an alternative epistemology, and to do so as he went along. In this respect, Jung's work followed parallel channels, as he sought to make of the fledgling inquiry of psychoanalysis a "science" while resisting the reductive paradigm which had so captured Freud. In this sense, both Massignon and Jung were engaged in inquiries

in the "human sciences," all of which were very much in their early stages, and so easily tempted to adopt paradigms borrowed from other modes of inquiry which were more manifestly "scientific." The early conflict between Jung and Freud which precipitated their break turned on this very methodological point, with Jung challenging Freud's "empiricism," or respect for the facts of the psychoanalytic encounter. It was Jung's attention to that encounter which made him eschew any procrustean model from the natural sciences of the time, and indeed led him to propose alchemy as an alternative pattern. This maneuver was at once ironic and confrontative: take a proto-science now discredited as "mystical" and place it before one's readers as the very paradigm of a new discipline which sought to earn its credentials as a *science*! ² A reader of Massignon is immediately reminded of his penchant for allusion, both linguistic and historical, to open up a path for understanding texts or events which we would otherwise read quite differently. What better way to remind western readers that we have a great deal to learn in approaching contexts so foreign as the ones which Massignon sought to penetrate! Yet such an approach runs the risk of turning off one's readers as well, as mainline psychology has effectively sidelined Jung to this day, while Islamicists make ritual obeisance in Massignon's direction, yet are often at a loss how to learn from him or his writings.

As a first step towards delineating what we have called an alternative epistemology, it is useful to note his predilection for the study of the lives and writings of those whom the tradition had identified as "mystics." His justification for such a focus, published in 1922, argues that it was precisely "the mysticism of Islam [which] made it an international and universal religion. International through the proselytizing work of mystics visiting infidel countries [who] did much more than the tyrannical fanaticism of conquerors to convert so many Indians and Malays to Islam. Universal, because the mystics were the first to understand the existence and moral efficacy of *al-hanifiyya*, the rational monotheism natural to all men."³ So his work transcended the descriptive ethnographic school from the outset; he was seeking a kind of understanding which could lead his readers to self-understanding. He goes on to explain: "Sufism, which 'enlivened' Islam. . . , was a method of thorough introspection, of making use *ab intra* of all of life's events, fortunate or unfortunate. It was ritual experimentation with pain, and it transformed those loyal enough to persevere to the end into physicians, to whom oth-

² Jung's development can be found in *Psychology of the Transference* trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966).

³ *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism* trans. Benjamin Clark (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 9; for *al-hanifiyya*, see *Passion of al-Hallaj* trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982) 3.105.

ers could then go for treatment" (10). This also provides a way of corroborating one's research: "our only way to verify the reality that was the goal of Islamic mystics' experiments is to probe their social consequences, to examine the mystical rules' value and effectiveness in curing the body of society" (10-11). So the mysticism which Massignon discovered in Islam is never a matter of sheer interiority: "it is an experimental science, a method of introspection; it aims by definition at reality itself, at the very heart of man, the intention behind the intonation, the smile under the mask. Behind a person's conduct it seeks a grace which comes only from God. Therefore, an appraisal of each subject's degree of sincerity, an examination which makes every conscience transparent, is basic to the study of mysticism. To proceed we must be able to rely on a detailed inquiry into the lives and extant works of those who claim to teach it" (94). This is completed by assessing "how the ideas and actions of the person were greeted by his entourage."⁴

So Massignon had come to be convinced, through his appreciation of the Arabic language itself and of the reception which Sufi masters received in the tradition, that he was indeed dealing with a *science*, so needed to sensitize his tools of inquiry—professedly "scientific"—to ascertain what makes Sufi inquiry, with its master/disciple relationship, work. According to the reigning positivistic canons, anything smacking of "mysticism" would be deemed beyond the boundaries of reason and hence of legitimate inquiry, so to call it a "science" could only be a provocative statement. Moreover, to watch him proceed via allusion and archetypal connections to expound what this science was able to unveil in its inquiry, was in effect to propose and execute what I have called an epistemological alternative to the prevailing positivistic ways of understanding anything different; alternative in that it did not presume a detached "objectivity" but rather demanded some form of participation in a mode of understanding more akin to faith than to knowledge, as generally understood. With the hindsight offered us by the work of Pierre Hadot (and the philosophical therapy of Wittgenstein) we can show Massignon's strategies for understanding Islam to be a way of challenging the "intellectual exercises" associated with the accepted modes of inquiry prevailing in the human sciences in his time with another paradigm closer to the "spiritual exercises" which Pierre Hadot shows were required to pursue ancient philosophy properly.⁵ The austere demands of objectivity are familiar to us from Max Weber; the quite different requirements of self-involvement

⁴ Cited in Gude, *Louis Massignon*, 115.

⁵ Pierre Hadot was the first French reviewer of Wittgenstein; Hadot's work can be sampled in an English edition by Arnold Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

in doing philosophy are already adumbrated in Plato's Socratic dialogues. Massignon pushes these a step further, to invite us to attend to the inner transformation promised in the master/disciple pedagogy of classical Sufism. Here an appreciation well beyond superficial acquaintance with the structures of the Arabic language seems to be called for, although Massignon's two magisterial studies—the *Passion of al-Hallāj* and the *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*—are both designed to lead a western reader into such an appreciation. Yet it remains clear that the "spiritual exercises" involved in a fuller grasp of the mode of understanding proper to this strange "science" will involve drawing one into the practice of this language.

Yet the most salient fact about the language for Massignon is its serving as a vehicle for this Abrahamic faith. Islam has exploited the capacities of Arabic for expressing the divine-human transaction granted in the Qur'ān—something the language could never have managed on its own. So with the revelations to Muḥammad, Arabic became the language of the Qur'ān, and Massignon came to celebrate it for that very reason. This, of course, distinguishes him from other "Orientalists," who were indeed fascinated with things Islamic but for whom Islam itself remained a closed book.⁶ The fact, of course, that Massignon's return to his own faith came, as he clearly felt it, through the inner tutelage of al-Hallāj, forever linked his ever-deepening religious faith with that of Muslims. Indeed, it is crucial to understanding this dynamic of inner exchange that while Massignon's fascination may have been with Islam, his journey came to be with Muslims, with people of faith with whom he felt so clearly at home. And here lies the open secret of interfaith understanding: friendship celebrated in hospitality. Here we may turn to the "Three Prayers of Abraham," originally privately printed for limited circulation, and recently published under the auspices of the "Institut Internationale de Recherches sur Louis Massignon," with a series of illustrations taken from mosaic, sculpture, and iconography.⁷ The occasion for the first of these prayers is Abraham's bargaining with God over the fate of Sodom; the second, Ishmael's being sent away ("the *hijra* of Ishmael"); and the third, the "sacrifice (*akedah*) or

⁶ It is worth noting Edward Said's appreciation of Massignon in his *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 282-89, where he counterposes Massignon's approach to that of Renan, noting (in summary) that they "are polar opposites within Orientalism. Massignon is the philologist as guest, as spiritual traveler extraordinary, as—to use Gerard Manley Hopkins' words for Duns Scotus—the rarest-veined unraveler of Islamic civilization the West has produced" (288).

⁷ *Les trois prières d'Abraham* (Paris: Cerf, 1997). This elegant edition contains an illuminating preface by Daniel Massignon, placing these prayers in the context of his father's "curve of life," as well as invaluable appendices, listing those individuals to whom the original printed version was sent, as well as a selection of epistolary responses to the prayers from these recipients.

'binding') of Isaac." The first two were composed in the thirties, the last sketched in 1949, with a final synoptic version of the three prayers appearing in *Parole donnée* in 1962, the year of his death. What Westerners inevitably recognize as *biblical* episodes are also familiar to readers of the Qur'ān, so one might hypothesize a shared tradition. Yet Massignon characteristically sidesteps any source speculation, treating the subjects synchronically, bringing biblical and Qur'anic narratives together into one stereoscopic vision. So the "prayers" are designed to lead Christian and Muslim readers into a better appreciation of their respective faiths, by calling attention to their points of intersection. Yet since his method eschews syncretism of any kind, when that intersection takes place it will be realized, as it was for Massignon himself, in the hearts of his readers.

Towards a Theology of Other Religions

The key to Massignon's reading of the scriptures, be they biblical or Qur'anic, lies in the traditional understanding of *sensus plenior*, a notoriously difficult mindset for an empirical age to comprehend. For it is not an additional sense of scripture, as are typological or allegorical senses, but rather a kind of harmonic or resonance of the literal (or "simple") sense, abetted by the faith of those who read these texts as revealed and hence open to cross-cultural allusions. I would suggest that Massignon's keen sense of there being but one God, complemented by his careful delineation of the proper notes of each of the traditions which affirms that *oneness* as an article of faith, leads him to catch resonances between the assertions of each tradition which other readers would fail to see. That is, the very oneness of God leads him antecedently to suspect correlations between divergent traditions, while his respect for those divergences forbids him seeking "commonalities" in any straightforward way. He is forever reminding western readers of the *differences* attendant upon the very structures of Semitic languages, notably Arabic, yet his abiding faith in *tawhīd*, or the oneness of God, leads him to suspect correlations linking the diverse revelations. These will often be evidenced in one tradition's correcting lacunae or distortions in one of the others. So, commenting on the second prayer of Abraham, attendant on the *hijra* of Ishmael (in his final synoptic version), Massignon links Islam with the prophet Muḥammad, who "comes after Moses and Jesus as a 'negative proclaimer' of the judgment of death which accompanies every created thing, and so constitutes a mysterious response to the grace of the prayer of Abraham for Ishmael and the Arabs. . . . Yet Islam has a positive mission as well: to reproach Israel" for having failed to recognize that the Messiah whom they were privileged to await had indeed come in "Jesus, son of Mary, who will also return at the end of time in the sign of judgment. Islam also reproaches

Christians, for none of them has recognized the sign of the holy table, nor have they yet realized the rule of monastic perfection (*rahbānīya*) which alone can form the second birth of Jesus in their midst, and so anticipate, by this coming of the Spirit of God in their midst, the resurrection of the dead of which Jesus is the sign."⁸ In his earlier version of this prayer, he differentiates Islam from the covenantal religion of Israel, identifying it as "the simple reminder, by way of a Messenger, of the primitive covenant of humanity and of its demanding judgment" (92), recalling his typology of an "Israel rooted in hope, Christianity focused on charity, and Islam centered on faith" (98).⁹

What seems to be going on here is a careful development from within Christianity itself of a theology of other religions, notably of the Abrahamic faiths. And when we recall the prescient words of the Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate*, on Islam, we can begin to see the fruits of the scholarship and especially of the person of Louis Massignon.¹⁰ For it would be difficult to find a longer, more sustained animosity than that between official Christianity and Islam. For if the Jew was the "other" in the midst of Christendom, Islam was the "other" facing it, and with power at its disposal. Indeed, circumventing the hegemony of the Islamic world over the silk road had to be one of the prime motivations for bankrolling Columbus' quest for an alternative route to the Indies. Yet Massignon insisted on seeing this "long battle as providential: it safeguarded the unity of Christianity, the supranational character of the Pope," and created in Jerusalem an enclave of the Abrahamic faiths.¹¹ These are certainly unique perspectives, for during the course of their mutual existence, Islam and Christianity had been pitted against each other, precisely because of their

⁸ *Ibid.*, 141-42, on Muhammad as a "negative proclaimer," see the essay of Maurice Borrmans "Aspects théologiques de la pensée de Louis Massignon sur l'Islam" in *Louis Massignon et le dialogue des cultures*, ed. Daniel Massignon (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 123

⁹ For the "primitive covenant of humanity," see Thomas Michel, "God's Covenant with Mankind according to the Qur'an," *Bulletin Secretariatus pro non-Christians* (Vatican City) 18 (1983), 31-43

¹⁰ "The church also has a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to humanity. They endeavor to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own. Although not acknowledging him as God, they venerate Jesus as a prophet, his virgin Mother they also honor, and even at times devoutly invoke. Further, they await the day of judgment and the reward of God following the resurrection of the dead. For this reason they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds, and fasting. Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred council now pleads with all to forget the past and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding, for the benefit of all, let them together preserve and promote, peace, liberty, social justice and moral values" (3)—*Vatican Council II* ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport NY: Costello Publishing, 1996), 571-72

¹¹ *Les trois prières* 113

overtly world-wide mission, coupled with the curious difference that Islam's later origins could give the *prima facie* impression of superseding Christianity much as popular Christian lore had that faith superseding Judaism. The territorial standoff between Islam and western Christendom, with the attendant isolation of eastern churches from the west, also allowed stereotypes to prevail. What Massignon came to see was that Islam was more resourceful spiritually than it ever had been militarily, and that these resources could be mined by Christians to recover dimensions of their faith hitherto hidden from their own eyes. Indeed, the explicit recasting of western missionary effort (by the French theologian, Jean Daniélou, in the fifties) as one of finding Christ even more than preaching him, can be traced quite directly to Daniélou's association with Massignon.¹² The effort continues, obviously, for one cannot reverse so enduring a conflict in a single generation, but the spiritual, intellectual, and moral energies of this single man allowed the formal and informal reconsideration to take a giant leap forward. It could not hurt, of course, that his Catholic faith remained above reproach, as well as his scholarly credentials, for the intuitive cast of his thinking and writing verges at times on the gnomic.¹³ Yet this too reminds us that dialogue must engage the whole person, so that friendship will always remain an indispensable element.

Many continue to ask, however, how can one reconcile a staunch faith in one tradition with such a welcoming openness to others? I would like to suggest that Massignon's example can be mined to come up with a plausible explanation, along the following lines. With the help of Gottlob Frege's useful distinction between *sense* and *reference* (which he illustrated from the example of Venus as 'morning star' or 'evening star'), we can easily see how the one God worshipped by Jews, Christians, and Muslims, will be recognized by different names, each of which will encapsulate the narrative of these respective revelations. Indeed, this indisputable fact is already reflected in the diverse names for God each of the traditions themselves gives to God. Unlike Frege's example, however, the God whom Jews, Christians, and Muslims worship cannot be independently identified (as Venus can), so each of the traditions needs the perspectives of the other to illuminate the language they have developed to speak of God, for any language can but signify God "imperfectly."¹⁴

¹² See the essay by Françoise Jaquin, "Pour une compréhension spirituelle des cultures: Louis Massignon et l'abbé Monchanin," in the UNESCO conference volume *Louis Massignon et le dialogue des cultures* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 341-56.

¹³ See Jacques Waardenburg's contribution to the UNESCO volume "L'approche dialogique de Louis Massignon," 177-200.

¹⁴ The phrase "imperfectly signify" is from Aquinas: 1.13.4; cf. Blackfriars translation by Herbert McCabe, O.P., *Knowing and Naming God* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), Appendix 3: 'Signifying Imperfectly', 104-5.

The result is one of "mutual illumination," which respects the perspectives proper to each, yet the inability of any single tradition to offer an adequate account of the unique source of its revelation. So a healthy tension between the insistence that God is one, with all that such a faith-assertion entails, and the realization that any single account of that divinity will fall short of articulating its transcendent unity, allows for other perspectives to be brought to bear. Moreover, such a strategy need not focus uniquely on similarities, but can celebrate differences as well, and so open the way to a dialogue fostering "mutual illumination."¹⁵ Massignon's characteristic contrasts among the faiths, like the one noted above which aligned Judaism with hope, Christianity with love, and Islam with faith, represents a model for Christian forays into a theology of religions, for it adapts a Christian triptych to offer some light on Christianity's relation with the other Abrahamic faiths. Not himself a systematic thinker, he seems a proper guide into so underdeveloped an arena, and certainly offers far more illumination than the singularly unilluminating "exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralist" scheme with which teachers often introduce this subject today. For that scheme turns uniquely on the issue of *salvation*, and proposes to resolve the questions which ensue by introducing a set of theological parameters which are simply inadequate to the task.¹⁶ Massignon is too much of a believer in the power of God as creator and redeemer to attempt to ask about anyone else's salvation, and too sophisticated theologically to countenance the terms in which that division has been introduced. His intuitive grasp of the religious significance of Islam, emerging as it did from the experience which returned him to his own faith, can offer sure guidance to others who would attempt to work out the parameters of a "theology of religions" from the indispensable ground of a lived shared respect for each other's faith.

To return from the person to our meeting, I can only recall the spirit which animated the exchange among person, many of whom had never before met one another. Carried out in both English and French, the exchanges were marked by an uncanny capacity for understanding one another. There was, to be sure, some concern about such meetings gatherings on hagiography, yet the overwhelming fruits seemed to have been a renewed animation of our personal endeavors to continue to pursue an interfaith understanding in a world so easily sidetracked into religio-nationalism. We shall publish the essays delivered, after partici

¹⁵ This prescient phrase I owe to my colleague Bradley Malkovsky, a student of Sankara and of "non-duality."

¹⁶ J. A. DiNoia, O.P. has offered a sensible alternative approach to this question in his *Diversity of Religions* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992).

POPE JOHN PAUL II AND ISLAM

"Christians and Muslims in general... have badly understood each other, and sometimes, in the past, have opposed and even exhausted each other in polemics and in wars. I believe that today, God invites us to change our old practices. We must respect each other, and also we must stimulate each other in good works on the path to God." Pope John Paul II in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teachings of the Catholic Church, 1963-1995* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997), 401.

This article offers a critical reading of Pope John Paul II's ideas on Islam as they have developed from the time he assumed office in 1978. In order to attain a clear view of his position, I will follow three courses of analysis: 1) focus on his understanding of Islam, as both a theological system and a socio-historical phenomenon, with all that these two dimensions imply; 2) discuss his ideas against the recent engagement of the Catholic Church in the life of the international Catholic community, especially in the Muslim world, and 3) compare his ideas on Islam to those of a selected number of modern Muslim theologians and thinkers on Christianity.

At the outset, I should like to stress that my choice of terminology reflects a complex world in transition where such terms as 'Muslims' and 'Christians' must be understood in the context of the recent triumph of the Western, that is, capitalist, system, in both its cultural and economic spheres, in the Muslim world as well as in the West. In other words, the reader must not take the 'religious terms' employed here at face value, but must understand them as part of the major intellectual mutations taking place in the world in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the triumph of the capitalist system, and the attempt of different contemporary religious movements, including the Islamic ones, to reorganize themselves and revitalize their activism.¹

As a universal monotheistic religion, Islam is a complex religious phenomenon that has given rise to all sorts of ideas, forces, and conditions over its long history. Regardless of their political motivations and ideological positions, Western scholars, often called orientalist,² have carried

¹ See M. Arkoun, "Emergences et problèmes dans le monde musulman contemporain," *Islamochristiana* 12 (1986): 135-61, and M. Watt, "Muslims and Christians after the Gulf War," *Islamochristiana* 17 (1991): 35-51.

² See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

out serious research over the past five hundred years in the field of Islamic studies, ranging from the Arabic language, to the Qur'ān, *Hadīth*, *Fiqh*, Sufism, and research on various Muslim social and political institutions.³ Especially since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, the Western scholarly community has preoccupied itself with 'Islamic fundamentalism' — its nature, history, and the menace it may pose to Western interests and to the nation/state in the Muslim world. Very often, and even in respected Western intellectual circles, Islam and Muslims are treated as the dangerous 'other.' It is heartening to realize, as will be amply illustrated in the following pages, that the Western religious community, especially the Catholic community under the guidance of its religious leadership, does not share these negative views of Islam and Muslims.

Whether Western scholars consider it an object of fascination, or a pirated copy of either Christianity or Judaism, Islam remains a unique religion, possessing an autonomous *Weltanschauung* that defines its place in the world of ideas and events through dialogue and openness. From this perspective, it should not be surprising that nineteenth century Muslim thinkers, such as 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, Hassan al-'Attar, Rifa'a R. Tahtawi, al-Saffar, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and Muhammad 'Abduh, accepted, at least in principle, the concept of appropriating the scientific and intellectual spirit of Western civilization, although they were opposed to its political and military agenda, i.e., expansion to the Muslim world under the guise of modernity.⁴

Therefore, in dealing with the position of Pope John Paul II on Islam, one must be attentive to both the evolution of the Catholic position on interreligious dialogue, especially that with Islam, and to the complex manifestations of Islam in the modern Muslim world as well. Furthermore, one must not ignore the nature of coexistence among Muslims and Catholics in different parts of the Muslim world, especially in such countries as Indonesia, Nigeria, Sudan, the Arab Middle East, Bangladesh, and the Philippines.

It is clear that the Pope is cognizant of the nature of Islam as a universal tradition, understands its theological and spiritual dimensions, appreciates the impact of Western modernity on the Muslim people, the rise of the nation/state in the Muslim world, the intellectual Islamic response to the Western onslaught, and the appropriation of selected Western con-

³ See Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁴ See A. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); H. Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), and I. Abu-Rabi', *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986).

cepts. In other words, in treating the Pope's position on Islam, I take Islam to mean both theology and history, or both normative and historical Islam. These two dimensions, multi-layered as they are, define the meaning and identity of Islam in the modern world. Furthermore, I think that to appreciate the position of Islam in the modern world and, more specifically, in the Arab Middle East and North Africa, one must note the adaptation of the mainstream Islamic tradition to the modern world, the new relationship forged between Islam and society, and the newly-acquired Muslim historical consciousness of the position that Islam must (or must not) take in the new nation/state.

The Catholic Church began to acknowledge the need for understanding the Muslim world and appreciating the religious impact of Islam on modern Muslim lives with the second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that emphasized unequivocally the following:

The Church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and mighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to humankind. . . . Over the centuries, many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values. (Nostra Aetate, 3).⁵

The Church began to stress the common spiritual and moral bonds binding all peoples of faith, including Muslims and Catholics. Religion promotes progress and must be in the business of protecting human rights. According to one observer, the Church is preoccupied with promoting "a doctrine of dialogue."⁶ Pope John Paul II, elected in 1978, accelerated the process of dialogue with people of other faiths. He has since encouraged the followers of the Catholic Church to investigate, with both wisdom and intelligence, the spiritual treasures of other faith traditions, the worship aspect of other religions, mainly Islam, and the belief in the one Unseen God. In an address to religious and government leaders in Karachi, Pakistan, in 1981, the Pope maintains: "I pray this mutual understanding and

⁵ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Recognize the Spiritual Bonds which Unite Us 16 years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue* (Vatican City: Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 1994), 3. For an elaboration on the views of Pope Paul VI on Islam, consult M. Borrmans, "Le pape Paul VI et les musulmans," *Islamochristiana* 4 (1978): 1-10.

⁶ Lucie Provost, "From Tolerance to Spiritual Emulation: An Analysis of Official Texts in Christian-Muslim Dialogue," in R. Rousseau, ed., *Christianity and Islam* (Scranton: Ridge Row Press, 1985), 204. For a discussion of the activities of the Vatican in the field of Christian-Muslim relations, consult M. L. Fitzgerald, "Twenty-Five Years of Dialogue: The Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue," *Islamochristiana* 15 (1989): 109-20.

respect between Christians and Muslims, and indeed between all religions, will continue and grow deeper, and that we will find still better ways of cooperation and collaboration for the good of all."⁷ The Pope's tone is universal and the spirit of his message is highly reconciliatory.

Both Muslims and Christians constitute the same nation in many countries. The Pope urges both to coexist in peace. In addressing Muslims on a visit to the Philippines in 1981, the Pope states: "My dear friends, I wish you to be convinced of the fact that your Christian brothers and sisters need you and they need your love. And the whole world, with its longing for greater peace, brotherhood and harmony, **needs to see fraternal co-existence between Christians and Muslims in a modern, believing and peaceful Philippine nation.**"⁸ [Emphasis added] It is interesting to note that the Pope highlights dialogue between Catholics and all believers of other faiths as a method of reconciliation, understanding, safeguarding human dignity, and protecting the rights of the underprivileged—both the poor and minorities. His concept of human rights derives from the inalienable rights given by God to man, and this leads me to conclude that the Pope's thinking on the matter of social justice, equality, and human rights is motivated by a new theological understanding of the human being—any human being regardless of his/her social, educational and religious background and, above all, regardless of the fact whether s/he is a believer or not. Humans must be protected, respected, and encouraged to do the right thing. The Pope's ethos of universality is to be commended in a world that is getting smaller day by day and in a context that permits the rich to dominate the poor, both intellectually and culturally.

During his visit to Indonesia in 1989, the Pope stated:

One of the principal challenges facing modern Indonesia is that of building a harmonious society from the many diverse elements which are the source of the nation's present promise and future greatness. Indonesia's Catholics find a deep motivation for their contributions to this enterprise in the vision of universal harmony which the Christian faith offers them. By our belief in one God who is the creator of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen, we who follow Christ are inspired to work for the advancement of peace and harmony among all people.⁹

In a sense, the Pope agrees wholeheartedly with *Pancasila*, the official philosophy or ideology of Indonesia. From the perspective of the state, *Pancasila* guarantees the freedom of all religions, namely Islam, Catholi-

⁷ *Recognize the Spiritual Bonds*, 21.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

cism, Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Although Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world, it has stressed the necessity of separating religion from politics while respecting, if not encouraging, the religious wishes of all groups in society. In his response to the Pope's remarks, Dr. H. Munawir Sjadzali, the Minister of Religious Affairs in the Republic of Indonesia in 1989, stressed that "It is true that the Muslims in Indonesia are a majority. But for us, there is no majority and minority. We are all sons and daughters of Indonesia who have the human right to adhere to a religion according to one's own conviction."¹⁰ In order to clarify the Pope's position on Islam in the twentieth century, a brief discussion of Muslim-Christian relations, especially Muslim-Catholic relations, in Indonesia seems in order.

A main contention of this article is that both the Pope and the Catholic Church prefer a secular and democratic system of government in the Muslim world to an Islamist one, that is, a type of government that preaches the slogan, 'Islam and politics are one.' It is in this context, one may argue, that the interests of the Christians, as equal citizens of the same state, can be safeguarded. To an objective observer, Indonesia has been a 'secular' country since the proclamation of its independence from the Dutch in 1945.¹¹ In other words, the political elite governing the country has refused to associate itself with 'Islamism' or Islamic revivalism, of the type which governs in Iran and the Sudan. In the words of President Suharto, *Pancasila* is based on the rejection of poverty, backwardness, conflicts, exploitation, capitalism, feudalism, dictatorship, colonialism, and imperialism. That is to say, *Pancasila* is based on the conviction that Indonesia must follow an independent foreign policy and a cohesive nationalist policy that preserve the religious, ethnic, and linguistic balance and integrity of the country.

Like any Third World country after independence, Indonesia has faced the 'question of religion' (that is, are religion and politics one?) with an eye open to the long legacy of Dutch colonialism and to new creative ways to imagine the future of the nascent Indonesian nation. Taking into account the different religious, social, economic, and intellectual forces at play after Independence, Indonesia opted to create a state system that is

¹⁰ *Ibid.* According to a contemporary Catholic scholar. "Au nom de la philosophie *Pancasila*, les représentants de l'Etat estiment qu'ils doivent préserver l'harmonie à l'intérieur de chaque religion, entre toutes les religions, et entre les religions et le Gouvernement." F. Raillon, "Chrétiens et Musulmans en Indonésie: les voies de la tolérance, *Islamochristiana* 15 (1989): 162-63.

¹¹ The official position of the Indonesian government on this matter runs as follows 'Indonesia is neither a secular state nor a theistic one' See H. Tarmizi Taher, *Aspiring for the Middle Path Religious Harmony in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Society, 1997), especially 55.

neither Islamic nor secular, but theistic.¹² Within this system is a guarantee that all people have the freedom to practice the religion of their choice.

Islam has been a potent political and social force in Indonesian society since 1945, and various Islamic voices have arisen to express a variety of religious positions and trends. One can distinguish four main currents of Muslim thought in contemporary Indonesia: Modernism, neo-modernism, Islamic social democracy, and internationalism-universalism. Such 'neo-modernist' Muslim thinkers as Abdurrahman Wahid, Nurcholish Madjid,¹³ Ahmad Wahib, Djohan Effendi¹⁴ and, to a limited extent, Amien Rais, stress the democratization of Indonesian society and reject placing religion at the service of politics, since both deal with different arenas of life. This latter current is very much appreciated by the Indonesian Catholics and the Catholic Church, especially as Catholics voice their concern about the burning of churches in certain regions in Indonesia.¹⁵ Other 'internationalist' Islamic voices, although paying lip service to *Pancasila*, would prefer to establish an Islamic state, and warn of the threat of Christian missionaries to the Islamic foundations of Indonesian society.¹⁶

The Pope seems to support the spirit of *Pancasila*, and he distances himself from the Islamists and their attempt to seize political control. While addressing the Indonesian Bishops in 1996, the Pope stated that, "When the laity receive a solid Christian formation, they are equipped to play a constructive role in the life of the Nation, with a distinctive motivation and force. . . . This is the attitude which inspires support for *Pancasila*, the body of principles which fosters national unity, religious tolerance and justice among all various communities of your vast country."¹⁷ In one sense, one may argue that the Pope is for the nationalist imagining of the contemporary nation-state in the Muslim world, which is, in the case of Indonesia, based on instilling pride in all Indonesians of their common historical and cultural experience and values, the nationalist fight against Dutch colonialism in the first half of the twentieth century, creating an atmosphere

¹² See the preceding note

¹³ Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, Kemoderna dan Keindonesianan* [Islam Modernity and Indonesianness] (Bandung, Mizan, 1987)

¹⁴ "Abdurrahman [Wahid] and his followers are social democrats and religious liberals." R. William Liddle, "The Islamic Turn in Indonesia: A Political Explanation," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55 (1996): 617

¹⁵ See in this issue the discussion of the Indonesian situation by Karel Steenbrink. To get the view of some people in the Christian community on religious tension in contemporary Indonesia, one can consult, e.g., Indonesia Christian Communication Forum, "The Closing, Damage and Burning of 374 Church Buildings in Indonesia from 1945 to 1997," *ICCF Publications* (Surabaya, 1997).

¹⁶ See T. Michel, "Militant Islam in Asia," *Pro Dialogo* 88(1995):50-53

¹⁷ "Discourse of the Pope to the Bishops of Indonesia on 'ad limina' visit," *Pro Dialogo* 95 (1997):177.

of religious harmony and tolerance within the country, supporting the modernization process, and abhorring all external intervention that is threatening to the political and social fabric of society.¹⁸ The Pope seems to be saying that the rights of the Christian community in Muslim countries can be best served in the context of a democracy and deepening understanding of each other's faith.¹⁹

In spite of a greater presence of Islamic values and symbols in the contemporary Indonesian public and social space than in Malaysia, the Indonesian elite is far more reserved in its Islamic pronouncements than its counterpart in the neighboring state. The nationalist imagining of Indonesia stresses the importance of cultural and social integration while shying away from religious tension and disintegration. The message of *Pancasila* as conceived by the writers of the Indonesian constitution is clear: let us keep the multi-faith and multi-cultural composition of society, since pluralism, with its flexible and creative interaction with society, is an important element for the progress and modernization of society.²⁰ In other words, the vision of those who believe in the nation-state differs substantially from that of the Muslim revivalists. In normative terms, revivalists would like to see the Muslim world linked together by the power of the Muslim doctrine, whereas the nation is linked together by language, common heritage, and past experience. Since this type of nationalist imagining is more suitable to the religious minorities than the revivalist one, religious minorities fear the possibility of the revivalists' ascendance to power in the future Indonesia.

To elaborate the Pope's understanding of the relationship between Catholics as a minority in a Muslim society, and Muslims, it is imperative that we take an additional example to that of Indonesia, the Sudan. Since the coming to power of General Omar al-Bashir in 1989, the Sudan has declared itself an Islamic state, meaning that the *Shari'a* is the supreme law in the land.²¹ By and large, the Christian community in the Sudan, be it Protestant or Catholic, has opposed implementation of the *Shari'a* since, in their view, it infringes upon their rights to worship and lead a peaceful life. The Sudan is thus a different case from Indonesia. In his visit to the Sudan in 1993, the Pope was particularly concerned with the unique situ-

¹⁸ On the differences between the 'nationalist imagination' and the 'Islamist imagination' in the Muslim world, see Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence*, especially chapter three.

¹⁹ See F. Machado, "Harmony among Believers of the Living Faiths: Christians and Muslims in Southeast Asia," *Pro Dialogo* 87 (1994): 214-16.

²⁰ See Nurcholish Madjid, "Islamic Roots of Modern Pluralism: [The] Indonesia Experience," *Studia Islamika. Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 1 (1994): 57-77.

²¹ See A. W. El-Affendi, *Turabi's Revolution: Islam and Power in Sudan* (London: Grey Seal Books, 1991).

ation facing the Christian community there. In addressing the President of the Sudan, he maintains:

The inalienable dignity of every human person, irrespective of racial, ethnic, cultural or national origin or religious belief, means that when people coalesce in groups they have a right to enjoy a collective identity. Thus, minorities [that is, Christians] within a country have a right to exist, with their own language, culture and traditions, and the State is morally obliged to leave room for their identity and self-expression.²² [Emphasis added]

In other words, the Pope believes that the Sudanese state has no right to impose ready-made rules, especially Shari'a rules, on the minority groups in the Sudan. Although the Pope recognizes that especially in the Sudan religion permeates all society, it is clear that he prefers a secular state to an Islamist one.²³ That is, the Pope's notion of religious liberty, especially for Catholics in the Muslim context, diverges somewhat from that of the Muslim notion,²⁴ however precisely defined. From a Catholic standpoint, the rule of the Shari'a does not guarantee Christian religious liberty and old legal formulations do not suffice to protect the rights of the Christians in the Muslim world. Likewise, although not mentioned explicitly by the Pope or any official in the Catholic Church, it is clear that there is a feeling on the side of the Catholic leadership that the application of the Shari'a may lead to religious fanaticism on the Muslim side. The official position of the Church is that "Religious fanaticism or extremism, which sometimes manifests itself in intolerance and even violence and murder, is a major obstacle to dialogue."²⁵ The closest the Pope comes to condemning the type of government ruling in the Sudan or Iran is when he states:

In countries where fundamentalist movements come to power, human rights and the principle of religious freedom are unfortunately interpreted in a very one-sided way—religious freedom comes to mean

²² *Recognize the Spiritual Bonds*, 136.

²³ The Pope does not express this notion quite explicitly. He however says that, "Religion permeates all aspects of life in [Sudanese] society, and citizens need to accept one another, with all the differences of language, customs, culture and belief, if civic harmony is to be maintained. Religious leaders play an important role in fostering that harmony." Pope John Paul II in addressing the leaders of the various religions of Sudan in Khartoum, February 10, 1993, in F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teachings of the Catholic Church, 1963-1995* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997), 509.

²⁴ See M. Talbi, "Religious Liberty: A Muslim Perspective," in L. Swidler, ed., *Religious Liberty and Human Rights in Nations and Religions* (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press, 1986), 175-87.

²⁵ F. Arinze, "The Engagement of the Catholic Church in Interreligious Dialogue since Assisi 1986," *Pro Dialogo* 95(1997): 211. See also R. Etchegaray, "Comment assurer le succès des processus de réconciliation et les soustraire aux contrecoups d'extrémistes?" *Pro Dialogo* 89(1995): 140-42.

freedom to impose on all citizens the 'true religion.' In these countries the situation of Christians is sometimes terribly disturbing. Fundamentalist attitudes of this nature makes reciprocal contacts very difficult.²⁶

For their part, Muslim revivalists argue that they are the only organized group in Muslim society that takes the issue of religious dialogue with Christians seriously and who respect the freedom of the 'People of the Book' to worship and express their ideas.

Likewise, the Pope takes up another issue that has proven problematic to Palestinians and Israelis: the question of Jerusalem and the rights of the Palestinians. He encourages all, especially Israelis, to preserve the sacred character of Jerusalem as a holy city to Jews, Christians, and Muslims and supports the right of the Palestinians to self-determination by creating their own state.²⁷

The Pope, besides being preoccupied with the presence of Catholics in Muslim societies, is also concerned about the human dignity and social well-being of the Muslim community, especially Muslim workers and their families, in Europe. In addressing the Muslims in France in 1980, he says: "While the motive which led you to leave your own countries, whether it be work or study, gives your departure a character of undoubted dignity, it is no less true that your condition as immigrants causes serious social, cultural and religious problems both for you and for the country which has received you."²⁸ It is clear that the Pope is conscious of the fact that there must be a thorough conversation between Muslims and Europeans about cultural and religious values. He is tireless in his encouragement, not just of Christians, but of Muslims to adhere to their sublime spiritual and cultural values, especially in a Westernized context. Also, one may argue, the Pope implores the Muslims to reaffirm their authentic values in a secular environment as a way of leading a spiritually fulfilling life. Furthermore, he seems to defend the right of the Muslims to preserve and enhance their cultural values in the face of the encroachment of the atheist values of the secular West.²⁹ What that means is that the Pope could be in agreement with a number of leading

²⁶ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 94.

²⁷ *Recognize the Spiritual Bonds*, 56.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁹ "Mais la libération du Sud passe d'abord par une décolonisation culturelle car un des principaux objectifs du post-colonialisme est l'hégémonie culturelle et la propagation des valeurs occidentales. Les conflits à venir seront des conflits de valeurs et il y a une très grande urgence à développer une communication culturelle entre le Nord et le Sud." Mahdi Elmandjra, *La décolonisation culturelle. Défi majeur du 21ème siècle* (Marrakech [Morocco]: Editions Walili, 1996, and Paris: Futuribles, 1996), 214.

contemporary Muslim intellectuals, such as Ḥasan Ḥanafī,³⁰ Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī³¹ and Mahdi Elmandjara,³² that the affluent North, that is, Western Europe and North America, refuses to embark upon a thorough conversation on cultural values with the South on the supposition that occidental values are the norm — that is, they are universal values — and that adopting them will mean the solution to the social and economic problems of the Third World.³³ The Pope believes in cultural diversity that protects human dignity and human rights,³⁴ and he is convinced that religious and spiritual norms, that are essentially neither occidental nor oriental but human, are the norm.

The Muslim world, like most of the Third World, suffers from the absence of democracy, a crisis in human rights, and lack of democratic channels that enable people to express their ideas freely. All of this takes place without a major outcry from the West.

Further, another dilemma facing the Muslim world is how to safeguard universal cultural diversity and pluralism in the face of the mounting hegemony of the United States of America! The answer lies in achieving major changes in the thinking of both North and South. The North must recognize cultural diversity and the South must affirm its cultural independence.³⁵ Also, the Muslim world suffers from a continuous “intellectual hemorrhage”, identified as the “brain drain”, which is the exodus of competent people: professionals and intellectuals from South to North. Many emigrate, not just in search of better economic and social standards, but because the development process in their native countries lacks the appropriate vision to incorporate them productively. Very often this lack of vision is complicated by blind imitation of the modernized North, leading to transfer of technology with no creative contribution from the South. In other words, the South can purchase technology but it must create its own forms of modernity and modernization. These forms, however, cannot be created in the context of the continuous exodus of skilled professionals. Therefore, the Muslim world suffers from three major problems:

³⁰ Ḥasan Ḥanafī is a leading Egyptian philosopher at the University of Cairo. See I. Boullata, “Ḥasan Ḥanafī,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed. John L. Esposito (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995)2:97-99.

³¹ Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī is a leading Arab philosopher today.

³² Mahdi Elmandjara is at the University of Muhammad V at Rabat, Morocco.

³³ “Le Nord a déployé jusqu’à présent très peu d’efforts pour comprendre et encore moins pour parler le langage du Sud. Il faut accorder une priorité aux systèmes de valeurs pour se rendre compte que la crise actuelle entre le Nord et le Sud est une crise du système total.” Mahdi Elmandjara, *Retrospective des futurs* (Casablanca: Ouyoun, 1992), 164.

³⁴ Not counting its nuclear and military prowess or economic and political influence, “post-colonialism is a weapon that aims at destroying cultural diversity.” M. Elmandjara, *La décolonisation culturelle*, 215.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

1) illiteracy; 2) lack of scientific research, and 3) lack of democratic values. In reading the official pronouncements of the Pope, it is clear that the above issues have not escaped his attention.

It is possible to argue that the Pope is for cultural and religious interchange between the Muslim world and the West. In addressing Muslims, he says, "When you are not embarrassed to pray publicly, you thereby give us Christians an example worthy of respect. Live your faith aloud in this foreign land and do not let it be misused for any worldly or political interest."³⁶ The emigration of Muslim populations to the West can produce positive cultural and religious results. In addition to expanding the cultural horizons of the host country and population, it teaches Christians the viability of piety and prayer in a modern setting. One perplexing issue the Pope deals with in his different speeches is, as stated earlier, 'political Islam' or Islamic political revival. It seems to me that the Pope's concern about this issue stems from the fact that the majority of the Christians in the Muslim world are uncomfortable with an Islamic political system and the application of the Sharī'a. The Pope states that,

A particular set of problems arises for the Christian because of the Islamic revival and reform movements in Islam. Catholics who are committed to the new impetus of the spirit which the Second Vatican Council has brought our Christian community can readily understand the desire of Muslim reformers to purify Islamic society. . . . However, we confess apprehension about the direction which Islamic reform can take and the possible consequences which it might have on our own Christian communities. In particular, we note concern about the status of Christians when Islamic states are created. . . . Christians cannot limit their contacts to particular segments within the Islamic community. Christians must realize that reformist, traditionalist, mystical, militant, quietist, and still other tendencies are to be found among Muslims. It is not necessary to determine which of these represents 'true Islam.'³⁷

In other words, the Pope sees correctly that 'Islam is a complex religious and historical phenomenon' that has given rise to all sorts of forces and tendencies and which cannot be confined to one particular trend or expression. Furthermore, Islamic revivalism, though a viable tendency on the contemporary Islamic scene, cannot claim the allegiance of all Muslims. In the view of Islamic revivalism, 'true Islam' must be practiced only within the confines of an Islamic political system. The Pope apparently does not want to challenge Muslim revivalists to implement a societal ethos in which Christians would be treated as equal citizens within

³⁶ *Recognize the Spiritual Bonds*, 30

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

an Islamist state. The Pope seems, instead, to prefer a modern nation-state to an Islamist state, mainly because he does not want to see the mixing of religion and politics in Islam.

A discussion of the Pope's treatment of Islam cannot be entirely satisfactory unless attention is paid to the basic theoretical outlines of the modern Muslim discussion of Christianity. Over the past century, Muslim scholars and religious thinkers have advanced a number of positions on Christianity. The Muslim religious leadership does not enjoy the same hierarchical organization as the Catholic Church. That is to say, Muslims lack a clear-cut official position on Christianity, and hence Muslim intellectuals have provided a variety of interesting opinions on Christianity, especially since the nineteenth century. These intellectuals were faced with the double problem of Muslim stagnation and Western progress, a reality brought about by the Western penetration of the Muslim world during the colonialist era. The Egyptian thinker Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905) did not treat Christianity as the antithetical other, but considered Islam, as a monotheistic phenomenon and a divine religion, to be highly intertwined with Christianity; that is, he saw the essence of Islam to be that of Christianity. This is what one also gets from the Pope's official statements on Islam.

'Abduh analyzes Christianity in response to two major critiques leveled at Islam by Farah Antoun, a Syrian emigre to Egypt and the founder of the secularist journal, *al-Jāmi'ā*.³⁸ Antoun maintains that Islam, as opposed to Christianity, is intolerant of science and liberalism for two reasons: 1) Islam does not distinguish between 'civil regime' (*sulṭa madanīya*) and 'religious regime' (*sulṭa dīnīya*) and, according to Antoun, this fusion between the political and religious has had a negative impact on tolerance and civil freedoms in general. Christianity, on the other hand, has known of a distinction between the political and religious and, as a result, modern Western civilization has come to appreciate freedom and democracy. 2) In the West, science and philosophy have escaped the oppression of the Church. Progress has been but a normal fruit of this. In Islam, however, religious oppression has stifled progress and the freedom of both science and philosophy.³⁹

In response to these accusations, 'Abduh decides to tackle the 'nature of the Christian religion' (*ṭabī'at al-dīn al-masīhī*) in order to prove that Islam does not oppose science, or philosophy, or the freedom of all religions and minorities to coexist. He argues that Christianity derives its

³⁸ See F. Antoun, *Ibn Rushd wa falsafatuhu*, ed. Tayyib Tizine (Beirut: Dār al-Farābī, 1988).

³⁹ M. 'Imārah, ed., *al-Amāl al-Kāmila li'l-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993), 3.263-64.

authenticity from the Unseen (the idea of one God), miracles, and the transience of this world. Islam's strong connection to Christianity is based on the strong Muslim belief in Christ as "God's spirit, God's word [or Logos], and His messenger to the people of Israel. Jesus did invite people to follow the correct maxims of the *Ṭaḥrīrāt*, and practice a righteous life, and to use reason, as a human faculty, in a righteous fulfillment of life."⁴⁰

In a sense, 'Abduh celebrates the pristine vision of Christianity as a bridge-builder, as an affirming message, not as dividing element or epistemological rupture. He argues that "Religion, [in a generic sense], is God's. It is essentially one religion in past and present. In spirit and fact, religion has never changed: it is the sincere belief in one God and the lending a helpful hand to people in life."⁴¹ This last position is in full agreement with the Pope's understanding of the rapprochement that has to evolve between Islam and Christianity. To both the Pope and 'Abduh, Christianity and Islam are of the same essence. It is human history which has given rise to theological and doctrinal differences, applications and results. In the final analysis, 'Abduh argues that Islam's identity is highly intertwined with that of Christianity and the "other" has no theological foundations; it has only social, political and historical reality.

But a major divergence may occur between 'Abduh's ideas and the Pope's. In his discussion of the relationship between Christianity and 'current civilization' *al-madaniyya al-hāḍira*, he argues that,

It is my opinion that there is no connection whatsoever between the Christian religion and the current civilization. Here is the New Testament, before our eyes, and its latent and hidden meanings do not escape us. The New Testament commands the believers to disentangle themselves from this transient life and be oblivious to its transient glory . . . This civilization, on the other hand, is the civilization of power, glory, luxury, arrogance, and hypocrisy, and its supreme ruler is money and business.⁴²

In other words, the material side of this civilization opposes the ideals of Christianity as stipulated in the New Testament. It is clear from the different statements of the Pope and the official pronouncements of the Catholic Church that modern Christianity is part and parcel of modern civilization, and that the evolution in the Church's position on dialogue, from no dialogue to dialogue, is predicated on the complex nature of modern Christianity and its connection to Muslims all over the world.

⁴⁰ *Ibid* 295

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² *Ibid* 222-23

Some of 'Abduh's ideas were translated into practice by the pioneering work of Ḥasan al-Bannā, the founder of the Ikhwān, the Muslim Brotherhood Movement in the Arab world. Al-Bannā agrees with some of 'Abduh's basic premises, since his ideas reflect the legacy of the reform school of both 'Abduh and his disciple, Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā.⁴³ Al-Bannā's solution to the question of stagnation and to the problematic of Westernization and direct colonialism was to build a mass-oriented organization in which he translated the ideas of the reform movement into a socio-political program that aims, in principle, at altering the social and political state of affairs. In a sense, he was both a thinker and an organizer. It is against this background that one must assess his views of the 'other.'

Al-Bannā builds upon the arguments of 'Abduh, but goes beyond him in two significant areas: first, he does not equate Christianity, as does 'Abduh, with the European 'other,' since there is an indigenous Egyptian Christian community which, to him, 'is indigenous to Egyptian soil and is not part of the Western conquest.' Second, unlike Muḥammad 'Abduh, who was somewhat soft on colonialism, al-Bannā criticizes European Christianity because it was used, in his view, by the secular West to colonize the rest of the world. "Europe retained its Christianity only as an historical heritage, as one factor among others for educating the simple-minded and naive among the masses, and as a means for conquest, colonization, and the suppression of political aspirations."⁴⁴

Therefore, to al-Bannā, the strange 'other' is to be found in the realm of European education exporting itself to the Muslim world. That is where colonialism and missionary activities coincide. Western powers were able to found educational and scientific schools in the heart of Islam "which cast doubt and heresy into the souls of Muslims and taught them how to demean themselves, disparage their religion and their fatherland, divest themselves of their traditions and beliefs, and to regard as sacred anything Western, in the belief that only that which had a European source could serve as a model to be emulated in this life."⁴⁵

What is even more harmful is that education was a tool used by the colonial powers to create an indigenous mercenary intellectual class made up of "the sons of the upper class alone," and consequently the masses were deprived of basic education in religious and secular sciences. Al-Bannā goes on to cite **mental colonization**, which was a "well-organized

⁴³ See A. al-Abyad, *Rashīd Riḍā: Tarīkh wa Sīra* (Tripoli: Gross Press, 1983); E. Shahin, *Through Muslim Eyes. Al Rashīd Riḍā and the West* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993), and A. al-Sharabāstī, *Rashīd Riḍā* (Cairo: Matabi' al-Ahram, 1970).

⁴⁴ H. Bannā, *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Bannā*, tr. C. Wendell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

campaign with a tremendous success, since it was rendered most attractive to the mind, and would continue to exert a strong intellectual influence on individuals over a long period of time. For this reason, it was more dangerous than the political and military campaigns so far."⁴⁶ The majority of the modern Muslim intelligentsia follow, to varying degrees, the line of argument provided by al-Bannā and other Islamic leaders *vis-à-vis* mental colonization and the role of the Christian mission in effecting such a colonization in the modern Muslim mind. In that sense, it is important to discuss the Pope's position on the issue of mission, since this has proven to be very controversial from both the Islamic and Christian sides.

The Islamic position is more or less clear that *da'wa*, "mission," is an integral part of Islam and that there are many methods to carry out, one of which is through 'kind debate' [*jiddāl bilalī hiya aḥsan*].⁴⁷ The Catholic Church, under the leadership of John Paul II, considers mission as an integral part in its vision of a better relationship between the Church and the followers of other faith traditions. The Church sees itself as 'the universal sacrament of salvation.'⁴⁸ In other words, the mission of the Church is totally embedded in the 'mystery of Christ' and Christians need to be more aware of this mystery. Love is one of the principal foundations of the mystery of Christ and, in that sense, the Catholic Church "is a messianic people, a visible assembly and spiritual community, and a pilgrim people who go forward together with all of mankind with whom they share the human experience. . . . The pilgrim Church is therefore 'missionary by its nature'. . . . For every Christian, the missionary duty is the normal expression of his lived faith."⁴⁹ Therefore, in its approach toward other traditions — and in our case to Islam — the Catholic Church is guided by its need to carry out its vision through mission and love. In theological terms, the Church is fully convinced of the validity of its theological pronouncements (God is love, the mystery of Christ, etc., etc.). Thus, preaching the Gospel of Christ to Muslims and non-Muslims alike and building churches as a means of embodying Christian teachings are in line with the theological vision of the Church. Theoretically, building churches and spreading Christian mission emanates from the position of the Church on peaceful coexistence and dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Practically, however, in areas of political tension in the Muslim world, the Catholic understanding of mission might backfire and jeopardize the relationship between the Catholic community and the Muslims.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁷ The Qur'ān states the following. "Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious." S. 16:125.

⁴⁸ F. Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue* 566.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 568.

The issue becomes complicated from a Muslim theological standpoint when the Pope preaches the concept of Christ as the Redeemer, "Man — every man without any exception whatever — has been redeemed by Christ. And with man — with each man without any exception, whatever — Christ is in a way united, even when man is unaware of it. Christ, who died and was raised up for all, provides man, each and every man, with the light and strength to measure up to his supreme calling."⁵⁰ Theologically, even the most open minded Muslims cannot accept the above claim that Christ, and not God, is the Redeemer and that Christ, "the Redeemer is present with grace in every human encounter, to liberate us from our selfishness and to make us love one another as he has loved us."⁵¹ In addition, Muslims cannot accept the claim, however positively made, that 'no salvation exists outside of the Catholic Church.'⁵²

Also, the Pope, as the highest representative of the Catholic Church, does not believe that the Islamic perspective of revelation is as true as that of Christianity. He argues that, "In Islam all the richness of God's self-revelation, which constitutes the heritage of the Old and New Testaments, has been definitely set aside."⁵³ He further says that although the Qur'ān addresses God in the most beautiful of names, God "is ultimately . . . outside of the world, a God who is only Majesty, never Emmanuel, God-With-us. Islam is not a religion of redemption."⁵⁴ What that means in effect is that Christianity and Islam, according to the Pope, have two clashing religious and theological visions. Whether the preceding statements are the Pope's personal opinion on Islam or represent part of the Catholic teachings on Islam is not the point here. There are many Catholics who believe in these statements, and the Pope seems to sympathize with these views personally.

The Pope's view that God in Islam is outside the world and distant from humanity does not accurately represent the Qur'ānic view of God as being close to man. "It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein."⁵⁵ Also, this position, which is polemical at best, does not reflect the rich history of Islamic spirituality, or *tasawwuf*, that has always emphasized the nearness of God to humans.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 573-74.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 573

⁵² See M. Fitzgerald, "Other Religions in the Catechism of the Catholic Church," *Islamochristiana* 19(1993). 29-41.

⁵³ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* 92

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *The Holy Qur'ān*, tr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Brentwood: Amana Corporation, 1989), S. 50:16

⁵⁶ On that see A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), and I. M. Abu-Rabi', ed., *The Mystical Teachings of al-Shadhili* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993)

Finally, it is possible to advance the following conclusions about the Pope's position on Islam and the Muslim world:

First, one may argue that the Pope's position on Islam is politically and socially open, but theologically conservative. Salvation is to be sought inside the Church, and the only true Redeemer is Jesus Christ.

Second, 'A doctrine of dialogue,' as a reflection of the political openness of the Catholic Church as understood by Pope John Paul II, is far from static. It means engagement, appreciation, sacrifice, patience, spiritual enrichment, and fighting on behalf of the underprivileged in society. Dialogue means a comprehensive and deep reconciliation between Muslims and Catholics in public life. This colossal project of reconciliation entails "a common will [between Christians and Muslims] to build a better world for future generations."⁵⁷ In a sense, the Pope encourages both Muslims and Catholics to go beyond a 'dialogue of words' to engagement in the true sense of the word.⁵⁸ He sees many common challenges and dangers.

Third, the Pope does not encounter Islam and the Muslim world, especially in his latest pronouncement, as the estranged other, like the secular press, but as a spiritual community that has deep religious roots and whose fate is highly intertwined with that of the Catholics. This is especially heartening if one examines the great cultural and political mutations taking place in the world in the wake of the New World Order following the defeat of Iraq in the second Gulf war and the collapse of the Soviet system. The Pope does not treat Islam and Muslims as a new universal enemy to the Western civilization. Far from that, he thinks that contemporary Christians have a lot to learn from the Muslim religious experience.

Fourth, the Pope prefers a democratic nation/state to an Islamist state in the Muslim world, the type of state that is committed to treating Christians as equal citizens by protecting their cultural and religious rights as a minority.

Fifth, the Pope defends human rights—those of the Muslims and the Christians—and in this he challenges the modern Muslim world to come up with its own version of human rights that is congruent with both the

⁵⁷ M. Borrmans, "Les dimensions culturelles et spirituelles du dialogue islamo-chrétien," *Islamochristiana* 22 (1996): 1

⁵⁸ On the conditions of dialogue, see H. Teissier, "Pour un renouveau du dialogue islamo-chrétien," *Islamochristiana* 15 (1989) 95-107. According to the contemporary Algerian thinker, Ali Merad, Christian-Muslim amity is eternal, "l'amitié des Chrétiens est une donnée permanente et précieuse pour les musulmans. Elle est inscrite dans leur Livre V, 85. Et parce qu'ils trouvent son fondement dans la Parole divine, les Musulmans se sentent personnellement responsables de la sauvegarde et de la pérennité de cette amitié, comme s'ils s'agissait pour eux de faire en sorte que la réalité vivante de l'Histoire réponde comme un écho à la vérité—toujours actuelle—de l'Écriture." A. Merad, "Dialogue islamo-chrétien pour la recherche d'un langage commun," *Islamochristiana* 1 (1975) 9

lofty principles of Islam and the current situation of the Muslim world. In other words, the Pope is critical of most of the military regimes in the Muslim world that do not promote genuine democracy in civil society. One may also argue that the Pope is implicitly critical of the Western support given to those military regimes that are afraid of democracy.

Sixth, to the Pope's mind, Muslims, especially those who live in Europe, can serve as a religious model for the Christians to emulate. The Pope seems to be concerned about the loss of spiritual and religious values in the contemporary Western world. Although he does not oppose modernity in principle, he would like the modern world to open its arms to basic traditional values, such as worship, transcendence, and belief in the after-life. The erosion of religious values in modern life is not the answer.

Seventh, although the Pope has encouraged the Catholic community to be open to Jews and Judaism, he does not buy into the Zionist attempt of Judaizing Jerusalem. In addition to being a central city in the religious imagination of the Muslims, Jerusalem is sacred to Christians and Jews as well.⁵⁹ The Pope emphasizes the uniqueness of Jerusalem as a spiritual treasure to the three monotheistic traditions. He argues for the preservation of its sacred character and being open to all people.

These ideas summarize Pope John Paul II's religious position on Islam and the Muslim world. At heart, the Pope comes to the conclusion that Islam has to be treated as a religion in its own right, and he therefore does not call openly for the conversion of Muslims to Christianity. Dialogue, and not conversion, is the way to reach out to Muslims and peoples of other faiths. Let us hope that both Catholics and Muslims practice the art of dialogue as a way to know about each other, and above all to know about one's own religious and spiritual treasures and values.

Hartford Seminary
Hartford, Connecticut

IBRAHIM M. ABU-RABH



⁵⁹ See G. Irani, *The Papacy and the Middle East. The Role of the Holy See in the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1962-1984* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1986), A. Kreutz, *Vatican Policy on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: The Struggle for the Holy Land* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990); R. Etchegaray, "De Jerusalem aux extrémités de la terre, le défi de la paix: juifs, chrétiens, musulmans," *Pro Dialogo* 91 (1996) 33-35, and also Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht, *To Rule Jerusalem* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

BEYOND PROOFTEXTING: APPROACHES TO THE QUR'ĀN IN SOME EARLY ARABIC CHRISTIAN APOLOGIES

Introduction: God's self-veiling between Gregory of Nyssa and *al-Shūrā* (42):51

One of the oldest Arabic Christian theological texts available to us in more than fragmentary form is an anonymous eighth-century Melkite, apology preserved in a parchment manuscript of the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai, *Sinai ar.* 154 (ff. 99^r-139^v). Margaret Dunlop Gibson, the text's first editor, entitled it *Fi tathlīth Allāh al-wāhid* or "On the Triune Nature of God"¹—misleading titles, the reader quickly learns, because after a very few pages about the Trinity the treatise turns to matters of soteriology and Christology.

It is to *Tathlīth's* soteriological chapter² that we first turn. There we learn how, as a result of the Fall, Satan gained ascendancy over Adam and his progeny. God in his mercy sent prophets and apostles, but they were unable to prise humanity from Satan's grasp. Finally, in order to reverse the effects of the Fall and to save humankind from Satan's sovereignty in the most fitting way, God sent his Word who "put on this weak, defeated humanity from Mary the Good, whom God chose 'above the women of the worlds,' and veiled *himself* through her."³

The striking metaphor of "self-veiling" — rendered by the Arabic word *iḥtajaba*, related to the noun *ḥijāb* or "veil" — is, of course, not new with the eighth-century Arabic apology. The student of Greek soteriological literature will instantly be reminded of the Catechetical Orations of Gre-

¹ Margaret Dunlop Gibson, ed. and trans., "An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles, from an Eighth or Ninth Century MS in the Convent of St Catherine on Mount Sinai, with a Treatise 'On the Triune Nature of God'," *Studia Sinaitica* 7 (London, C.J. Clay and Sons, 1899), 74*-107* (where the asterisk indicates the separate pagination of the Arabic text). Samir Khalil Samir is preparing a new edition of the text for publication, and has discussed it in two important articles: Samir Khalil Samir, "Une apologie arabe du christianisme d'époque umayyade?" *Parole de l'Orient* 16 (1990-91): 85-106, and idem, "The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity," in Samir Khalil Samir and Jorgen S. Nielsen, eds., *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)* (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1994), 57-114. The present writer has argued that the work should be dated to A.D. 788: Mark N. Swanson, "Some Considerations for the Dating of *Fi tathlīth Allāh al-wāhid* (Sinai ar. 154) and *al-Ġāmī' waḡūh al-imān* (London, British Library or 4950)," *Parole de l'Orient* 18 (1993): 115-41.

² Gibson, Arabic Version, 78*-84*.

³ *Ibid.*, 83*.

gory of Nyssa, who taught that, in Christ, God's "divinity was hidden by the veil (*prokalymma*) of our nature" so that he might accomplish his stratagem against the Devil.⁴ We might note in passing that it is no surprise that much of the vocabulary and imagery of the early Arabic Melkite theological literature should derive from Greek sources. After all, the greatest of the eighth-century Melkite theologians was John of Damascus.⁵

However, *Tathlīth*'s description of the Virgin Mary as the one "whom God chose above the women of the worlds"⁶ is *not* taken from Gregory or the Damascene, but is rather a direct citation of the Qur'ān. It is there, in *Sūrat Āl-Imrān* (3):42, that the story of the Annunciation begins with the words: "O Mary! God has chosen you and purified you, and *chosen* you *above the women of the worlds*."⁷ The Christian author needs no clumsy citation formula or footnote to let the reader know that he is citing the Qur'ān; many with ears to hear will hear. For them, four or five carefully chosen words in *Tathlīth* are sufficient to bring the Biblical and the Qur'anic stories of the Annunciation into sympathetic resonance.

This example alerts us to the fact that the early Arabic Christian literature is not *merely* a literature of translation, in close relationship to Greek and Syriac exemplars; it is *also* a literature in some intertextual relationship with the Qur'ān, confessed by Muslims to have been revealed by God "in a clear Arabic speech."⁸ Readers of Arabic Christian texts are warned to watch out for possible Qur'anic allusions, to listen for Qur'anic echoes⁹—or at least, should their knowledge of the Qur'ān be deficient, to keep a Qur'ān concordance at hand.

Thus alerted, let us return to the "self-veiling" metaphor. Granted that the word *iḥtajaba* may be explained on the basis of Greek antecedents, is it possible that it might also bear whispers from the text's Qur'anic subtext? We reach for the concordance,¹⁰ where we learn that the eighth Arabic verbal form *iḥtajaba* does *not* occur in the Qur'ān. However, the word

⁴ Or. *catech.* xxiv, 4, xxvi, 1. See Louis Mériquier, ed. and trans., *Grégoire de Nyssa Discours catéchétique* (Paris, Alphonse Picard et fils, 1908), 114-15, 118-21.

⁵ On the arabization of Melkite literary production, see the essays collected in Sidney H. Griffith, *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine* (Aldershot, Hampshire Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1992).

⁶ *allatī ṣafāhā llāhu 'alā nīsā' l-'ālamīna*, Gibson, *Arabic Version* 83*

⁷ Italics added

⁸ *al-Shu'arā'* (26): 192-95. The English translation is from Kenneth Cragg, *Readings in the Qur'ān* (London: Collins, 1988), 188.

⁹ I have learned to speak of intertextual "echoes" from Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1989), a book to which I am deeply indebted throughout this paper.

¹⁰ Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-mutahras li-alfāz al-qur'an al-karīm* (Beirut: Dār ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, n.d.; first published in Cairo, 1945).

for "veil", *hijāb*, occurs seven times.¹¹ One of these occurrences is in a verse, *al-Shūrā* (42):51, which speaks specifically of *revelation*. Here, only two verses from the end of the sura, we read:

It belongs not to any mortal (*bashar*) that God should speak to him,
except by revelation (*illā waḥyan*),
or from behind a veil (*aw min warāʾi ḥijābin*),
or that He should send a messenger
and he reveal whatsoever He will, by His leave;
surely He is All-high, All wise.¹²

The next verse continues, addressing Muḥammad: "Even so We have revealed to thee (*wā-kadhālika awwḥaynā ilayka*). . . ."¹³ The point is clear: here at the conclusion of *al-Shūrā* it is affirmed that God has truly spoken to Muḥammad, just as He has truly spoken to previous recipients of revelation. This affirmation artfully circles back to the sura's opening words, likewise addressed to Muḥammad: "So reveals to thee (*kadhālika yūḥi ilayka*), and to those before thee, God, the All-mighty, the All-wise. . . ." Still, the distinction in verse 51 between *three* modes of God's speech to mortals by *waḥy*, from behind a *hijāb*, or through a messenger—is more complex (and mysterious!) than necessary to establish the *inclusio*. Very early in the Qur'anic exegetical tradition God's speaking "from behind a veil" was associated with the experience of Moses,¹⁴ who, although he did not see God (or any human or angelic intermediary), *heard* God's uttered, audible speech.¹⁵

Did the anonymous author of *Taḥḥīṭh* intend that his choice of *iḥtajaba* to describe the Incarnation should be a whispered allusion to the mysterious *hijāb* of *al-Shūrā* (42):51? Did he hear Qur'anic echoes in this word? We do not know. Later Melkite writers, however, *did* hear the echoes and intend the allusion. Take, for example, the ninth-century Melkite encyclopedia entitled *al-Jāmiʿ wujūh al-īmān*, "The Compilation of the Aspects of the Faith."¹⁶ Chapter Eighteen of this massive work — its editor likes to

¹¹ *al-Aʿrāf* (7) 46, *al-Isrāʾ* (17) 45, *Alaḥqam* (19):17, *al-Aḥzāb* (33):53, *Sād* (38):32, *Fussilat* (41):5, and *al-Shūrā* (42):51. The passive participant *mahḥūbūn* also occurs once, *al-Mutaffifīn* (83):15.

¹² Translation of Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, The World's Classics 596 (London: Oxford University Press, 1964, first publ. by Allen & Unwin in 1955), 504. In this paper the English translations of the Qur'an's meaning are taken or adapted from Arberry unless otherwise indicated.

¹³ Emphasis added.

¹⁴ al-Ṭabarī traces this interpretation back to Ismāʿil b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Suddī (d. 745). Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl ay al-qurʾān* 30 vols. in 12, 3rd printing (Cairo, Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī and sons, 1968) 25, 45.

¹⁵ So explained, for example, in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Taṣṣū al-kabīr, aw Muḥīṭ al-ghayb*, 32 vols. in 16 (Beirut, Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1990) 27, 160.

¹⁶ The chief witness for this work is *London, British Library, or. 4950* (A.D. 877), ff. 1^r-197^v. Sidney H. Griffith is preparing an edition and English translation, and has published a number

call it the *Summa Theologiae Arabica* — consists of responses to questions asked by *al-muwaḥḥidūn* ("monotheists" = Muslims) and *aṣḥābu l-ithnayn* ("dualists" = Manichaeans).¹⁷ In the course of Question #3, a request for a definition of *al-mutaʿannis* ("the Incarnate one") receives the following response:

Say: "The Incarnation (*al-taʿannis*) is the indwelling (*ḥulūl*) of God in the Virgin Mary, the Purified One, and His selection of human flesh (*bashar*) from her, and His self-veiling (*iḥtijābuhu*) beneath the human flesh. And that is because flesh has no access to the Speech of God (*laysa li-l-bashari ilā kalāmī llāhi sabilun*) 'except by revelation or from behind a veil'. "¹⁸

The author's assertion is straightforward: the Incarnation is the "self-veiling" of God and may be understood as an instance of a mode of God's speaking to mortals, "from behind a veil," provided for in *al-Shūrā* (42):51.

How shall we describe this use of the Qurʾanic text? It is tempting to call *al-fāmiʿ*'s use of *al-Shūrā* (42):51 "prooftexting," although the term is inexact and somewhat pejorative. There is perhaps some justification for the label in the clumsy, unnuanced fashion in which the author makes the link between Christian confession and Qurʾanic analysis: *wā-dhālika anna, "and that is because"!* However, we should allow that the Christian apologist has not attempted to provide a detailed explanation of the Qurʾanic verse, which retains something of its own mystery even while it is pointed to as a warrant for Christian belief. We shall have more to say about "prooftexting" later in this essay.

In between the simple use of the word *iḥtajaba* in *Tathlith* (which left us in doubt as to whether any Qurʾanic echo was truly present) and the explicit citation and use of *al-Shūrā* (42):51 in *al-fāmiʿ*, we find texts where the Qurʾanic echo is faint but persistent and not to be discounted. For example, sometime during the ninth century the author/compiler of the *Kitāb al-burhān* ("The Book of the Demonstration"),¹⁹ one Peter of Bayt Ra's,²⁰ wrote:

of studies on the text. For a general orientation see his "The First Christian Summa Theologiae in Arabic: Christian *Kalām* in Ninth-Century Palestine," in Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi, eds., *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*. Papers in Mediaeval Studies 9 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990), 15-31; as well as the study mentioned in the next note.

¹⁷ Sidney H. Griffith, "Islam and the Summa Theologiae Arabica; *Rabi'* I, 264 A H.," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990): 225-64.

¹⁸ London, *British Library* or. 4950, f. 114^r.

¹⁹ Pierre Cachia, ed., *Eutychius of Alexandria: The Book of the Demonstration (Kitāb al-burhān)*, 2 vols., *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 192, 209 (= ar, 20, 22) (Louvain, Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1960-61).

²⁰ On the question of authorship see Samir Khalil, "La littérature melkite sous les premiers abbassides," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 56 (1990): 483-85.

We have found that the rational, speech-endowed spirit of human beings is finer (*al-taf*)²¹ than all other immaterial (*latīf*) created beings. Therefore it was the most appropriate of God's creatures to veil God (*bi-ḥijābi llāhi*). It was a veil for Him, and the "bloody" soul was a veil for it, and the material (*ghalīz*) body was a veil for what was finer than itself.²²

In this passage the echoes of *al-Shūrā* (42):51, if any, are nearly lost in the complexities of Peter's anthropology. If we look back a few paragraphs, however, we discover that Peter's speech about the Incarnation in terms of veiling God may be contrasted with his earlier description of God's communicating His command (*amr*) and prohibition (*nahy*) through His prophets and apostles (*anbiyā'ihī wā-rusulihī*) by inspiration (*bi-wahyihī*).¹³ Peter's use of Qur'anic pairs—command and prohibition, prophets and apostles—alerts us to the presence of the scriptural subtext. Then, the contrast of God's speech by inspiration (*wahy*) with God's taking a veil (*ḥijāb*) may plausibly be taken—if I may put it this way—as a veiled reference to *al-Shūrā* (42):51.

Echoes of *al-Shūrā* (42):51 are yet more insistent in a passage from the anonymous Melkite tract *Masā'il wā-ajwiba 'aqliyya wā-ilāhiyya* ("Questions and Rational and Theological Responses"),²⁴ which may well date to the ninth century.²⁵ In response to a Muslim's question ("Is the pre-eternal substance (*javhar*) one of the hypostases?") the author writes:

The pre-eternal substance is the essence (*dhāt*) of God most high,
unlike the substances created by Him,
for He is their Creator.

It is simple,
unlike the simple substances created by His substance.

It is not bounded, and not seen:

God did not speak to Moses the Prophet except (*illā*) in a veil (*ḥijāb*),
as He came [to him] in the Bush,
the Tabernacle,
the Ark of the Covenant,
and the Pillar of Cloud.

And at the end of times He veiled Himself (*ihtajaba*)
through union with humanity (*al-insān*).

²¹ *al-taf* is used for comparison of substances on a scale reaching from the most spiritual, immaterial, and fine (*latīf*) to the most material and coarse (*ghalīz*)

²² Cachia, *Demonstration* 1: 69 (paragraph #109)

²³ *Ibid.*, 1:60 (paragraph #96).

²⁴ *Sinai ar.* 434 (A.D. 1138), ff. 171^r-181^v The Rev. 'Id Salāḥ Sa'd (Eid Salah) is preparing an edition for publication.

²⁵ A dating of ca. A.D. 780 was proposed by Rachid Haddad, *La trinité divine chez les théologiens arabes (750-1050)*, Beauchesne Religions 15 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985), 38. Eid Salah more cautiously suggests a ninth-century date.

and became manifest to His creation in the most exalted creature:
the human (*al-insān*).²⁶

The conjunction of the words *illā* and *ḥijāb* in the context of God's speaking — specifically to Moses — is likely an allusion to the Qur'anic *illā min warā'ī ḥijābīn* and its interpretation by the early *mufasssīrūn*.

In the examples from *al-Burhān* and *Masā'il* just presented the echo of *al-Shūrā* (42):51 is audible but faint. It is sufficiently audible that we may believe that its presence is deliberate and apologetically meant: the Christian authors intend to suggest that the verse provides a Qur'anic way of thinking about the Incarnation. It is faint enough, however, that their suggestion remains just that, a suggestion. There is no explicit citation to turn it into an assertion. The reader may miss or ignore it altogether. He may sense a slight "uplift" in the tone of sentences enriched by vocabulary of the sacred text of Islam. Or she may be moved to Biblically oriented but Qur'anically shaped meditation on the many and various ways in which God has spoken to humankind. By allowing the Qur'anic verse to keep its distance, to be present as echo rather than placed on the stand as reluctant witness for Christian truth the apologists' suggestion remains tentative, a peaceful invitation to reflection.

The purpose of this rather lengthy introduction has been, by looking at the use of a single Qur'anic verse in several Christian apologies of common provenance, to intimate something of the variety to be found in the early Arabic Christian literature's approach to the Qur'ān—a variety that encompasses the strategy of clear citation and direct appeal *as well as* that of quiet allusion and echo. In the section that follows I shall attempt to give a fuller picture of this variety with examples selected from eighth- and early ninth-century Arabic Melkite apologetic texts, that is from some of the very oldest Arabic Christian theological compositions in our possession. Then we shall be in a position to think about the early Arabic Christian use of the Qur'ān in the light of a typology created and used for the study of intertextual relationships in very different literatures.

Approaching the Qur'ān: a sampling from the earliest Arabic Christian literature

1. Prooftexting

Many students of Christian-Muslim encounter will expect a "prooftexting" use of one another's scriptures to dominate in the earliest

²⁶ *Sinai ar.* 434, f. 171v

Arabic apologetic and controversial texts. This expectation, after all, corresponds to the extensive experience that many have had of present-day Christian and Muslim controversialists who point to texts of the others' scripture and offer their "real" explanation.

Furthermore, there are a few ancient Arabic Christian controversial writings long and widely available in printed editions in which Qur'anic texts are regularly appropriated for apologetic purposes without the slightest attention to Qur'anic context, let alone to communal consensus of interpretation. The Arabic Christian *Khabar Bāḥirā al-rāḥib* ("The Story of Bāḥirā the Monk"), for example, was published by Richard Gottheil nearly a century ago.²⁷ This popular story explains the appearance of Islam as an attempt at Christian missionary contextualization of the Gospel gone very seriously awry. Among its claims is that many key Qur'anic texts were first written by the Christian monk Bāḥirā and were originally intended to teach the Arabs Christian doctrine in a culturally appropriate way. Thus the *basmala*—*bi-smi llāhi r-rahmānī r-rahīmī*—was intended by the enculturation-practitioner Bāḥirā to refer to the Holy Trinity! The *laylatu l-qadr* (*Sūrat al-Qadr* (96))—which "is better than a thousand months; in it the angels and the Spirit descend . . ."—²⁸ is in fact the night of Jesus' birth!²⁹ These and many other examples, once read, are not quickly effaced from the memory.

The sort of intertextual policy often labelled "prooftexting" does indeed play a major role in the Arabic Christian apologetic literature, especially in popular texts that, passed from Christian hand to Christian hand, assured readers of the truth of Christian faith and the certainty of its vindication in fair debate.³⁰ Indeed, this approach is evident in what may be the oldest extant Arabic Christian apology: the eighth-century papyrus fragments catalogued as *Heidelberg, Papyrus Schott-Reinhardt* 438, and published by Georg Graf in 1934.³¹ In his introduction to the edition Graf comments on the anonymous apologist's "arbitrary, tendentious interpre-

²⁷ Richard A. Gottheil, "A Christian Bahira Legend," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 14 (1899-1900) 252-68 and 15 (1900-1) 56-109 [Arabic text], 17 (1903), 125-66 [English translation]. For a recent study see Sidney H. Griffith, "Muhammad and the Monk Bāḥirā. Reflections on a Syriac and Arabic Text from Early Abbasid Times," *Oriens Christianus* 79 (1995): 146-74.

²⁸ *al-Qadr* (96): 3-4.

²⁹ Arabic text of both examples in Gottheil, "Legend," 15 (1900-1) 59.

³⁰ Watch for the appearance in *Parole de l'Orient* of Sidney B. Griffith's study of the use of the Qur'an in the popular text claiming to be a transcript of Theodore Abū Qurra's debate with Muslim scholars in the presence of the caliph al-Ma'mūn.

³¹ Georg Graf, "Christlich-arabische Texte: Zwei Disputationen zwischen Muslimen und Christen," *Veröffentlichungen aus den badischen Papyrus-Sammlungen* (Heidelberg) 5 (1934): 1-34; text and translation of *PSR* 438 at 8-23. Graf's study of the manuscript led him to believe that it was a mid to later eighth-century copy of a text that may well have been written before A.D. 750.

tation" of Qur'anic texts which are cited, or mis-cited, without regard to context.³² A fine example of this tendentious interpretation is a passage in which the Christian attempts to claim Qur'anic support for the belief that God has a Son(!):

[the Christian apologist] said to the Muslim:

1. "Your apostle said in *Sūrat al-Zukhruf* [*al-Zumar* (39):41: 'Had God desired to take to Him a son, He would have chosen whomever He willed of whom He had created.'
-
2. "Also in your book he says well [*al-Balad* (90): 1-3]: 'No! I swear by this land, and thou art a lodger in this land; by the begetter, and that he begot.' . . .
3. "And in *Sūrat al-Nisā'* [(4):171]: 'Glory be to Him that He should have a son!'
4. "And in *Sūrat al-Baqara* [(2):116] he said: 'God has taken to Him a son, but to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth.'
5. "And in *Sūrat al-Zukhruf* [(43):81] he said: 'If the All-merciful has a son, then I am the first to serve him.'³³

The citations are very close to being exact— and yet they are constrained to say something quite foreign to the Qur'anic intention. The second citation, from *Sūrat al-Balad*, simply mis-takes the mysterious oath formula "by the begetter and that he begot" as applying to God. The other citations have been wrenched violently out of context. The conditional clauses of the first and fifth citations ("Had God desired to take to Him a son" and "If the All-merciful has a son") are taken to be assertions of a possibility, when in fact the Qur'ān responds to these clauses with, respectively, *subhānahu* ("Glory be to Him!") and, more elaborately, *subhāna rabbi s-samāwāti wa-l-ardi rabbi l-ʿarshi ʿaminā yaṣifūna* ("Glory be to the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne, above that they describe!"). In Qur'anic vocabulary, of course, *subhānahu* is a powerful exclamation *repudiating* any suggestion of *shirk*, the reprehensible "association" of any other being in the sole divinity and lordship of the Creator.

This same exclamation also figures in the third and fourth passage cited by the anonymous apologist. In the third, "*Subhānahu* that He should have a son!" means that God is far too *exalted* to have a son— precisely the *opposite* of what the Christian apologist claims. As for the fourth passage, from *Sūrat al-Baqara*, words have been dropped from the Qur'anic

³² *Ibid.*, 6.

³³ *Ibid.*, 10, 12.

original which runs: "*They said that* God has taken to Him a son. *Subḥānahu!* Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth." By dropping *wa-qālū* ("They said") and *subḥānahu* ("Glory be to Him!") the Christian apologist has transformed the divine repudiation of false belief into an affirmation of that belief!

It is worth pausing over these particularly egregious examples of Christian misuse of Islamic scripture, in part to point the contrast between such violent misreadings and more thoughtful Christian suggestions of Qur'anic warrants for Christian beliefs. When the author of Chapter 18 of *al-Jāmi'* cited *al-Shūrā* (42):51 as providing grounds for the possibility of the Incarnation, he made a claim that many would strongly debate and deny; however, he did not do violence to the plain sense of the text, which Muslims and Christians could agree is about the ways in which God—whom sight does not attain³⁴—has spoken to his human creatures. Shall we apply the somewhat pejorative term "prooftexting" to *al-Jāmi'*'s use of *al-Shūrā* (42):51? I think it better that we find some other term for this kind of use,³⁵ and suggest that if we continue to use the term "prooftexting," we reserve it for the violent misreading of the sort we find in *Papyrus Schott-Reinhardt* 438.

2. Discovering a language of praise

For an entirely different Christian use of the Qur'ān, let us return to *Fitṭh tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid*. The eighth-century Christian apology opens as follows:³⁶

↑ Praise be to God³⁷

before whom there was nothing,

and He was before all things;

after whom there is nothing,

and He is the Heir³⁸ of all things,

↑ and to Him is the destiny of all things;³⁹

who has preserved in His knowledge the knowledge of all things

↑ (and nothing but His knowledge is vast enough for this)⁴⁰

in whose knowledge all things come to their end;

³⁴ Cf. *al-An'ām* (6):103.

³⁵ See below, pp. 314ff.

³⁶ What follows is the present writer's translation of his own edition of *Sinai* *et.* 154, f. 99^r. See also Gibson, *Arabic Version*, 74*; Samir, "Apologie arabe," unpublished, 94-98; Samir, "Earliest Arab Apology," 66-70.

³⁷ *al-ḥamdu li-llāhi*, cf. *al-Fātiḥa* (1):2.

³⁸ See especially *al-Hijr* (15):23, to be read in context, also *al-Anbiyā'* (21):89 and *al-Qasas* (28):58.

³⁹ *wa-ilayhi māsiru kull shay'in*, cf. *al-Aḥzāb* (3):18 and *al-Nūr* (24):42. Also see note 57 below.

⁴⁰ *lam yasi' li-dhālika illā 'ilmahu*. For the paragraph thus far, cf. *Tā Hā* (20):98 (with many other parallels): *innamā ilāhukumu llāhu lladhī lā ilāha illā huwa wasī'a kulla shay'in 'ilman*.

ؑ and who has numbered all things⁴¹ in His knowledge.

We ask you, O God, by your mercy and power,
that you make us to be among those who know your Truth,

ؑ who follow your good pleasure,
and who avoid your wrath⁴²

ؑ who give praise using your most beautiful names⁴³
and who speak ؑ using your most sublime similitudes⁴⁴

You are ؑ the merciful one, the merciful Lord of mercy.⁴⁵

ؑ You sat upon the throne⁴⁶
were exalted above all creatures,
and filled all things.

You give preference to what you will,
but are not subject to others' preferring;

ؑ you establish your judgements,
but are not subject to others' judging;⁴⁷

ؑ you have no need of us,⁴⁸
but we are in need of you.

You are near⁴⁹ to the one who draws near to you,

ؑ and responsive to the one who calls upon you⁵⁰ and prays to you.

For you, O God, are ؑ Lord of all things⁵¹

and God of all things,
and ؑ Creator of all things⁵²

Open our mouths,

ؑ loose our tongues⁵³

⁴¹ *wa-ahsā kulla shay'in*, cf. *al-Jinn* (72) 28

⁴² *wa-yattabi'ā ridāka wa yata jannahu sakhatāka* cf. *al-Imrān* (3) 162.

⁴³ *wa-yusabbihū bi asmā'ika l-husnā* cf. especially *al-Hashr* (59) 24, also *al-A'raf* (7) 180, *al-Isrā'* (17) 110, and *Tā Hā* (20) 8

⁴⁴ *bi-amthālika l-'ulū'ā* If the author had been thinking of *al-Hashr* (59) 24 in the previous line, here he may have thought back to verse 21 For God's coining similitudes (*amthāl*) see also *al-Ra'd* (13) 17, *Ibrāhīm* (14) 25, *al-Nūr* (24) 35 (the "Verse of Light"), and *al-Ankabūt* (29) 43 The elative *al-'ulū'ā* is predicated of the word of God (*kalimatu llah*) in *al-Tawba* (9) 40

⁴⁵ *ar-rāḥimū r-rahmanū r-rahimū* For the first title, *ar-rahimū* cf. *ar-rahimū r-rahimū* in *al-A'raf* (7) 151, *Jūsuf* (12) 64 and 92, and *al-Anbiyā* (21) 83; or *khayrū r-rahimū* in *al-Mu'minīn* (23) 109 and 118.

⁴⁶ *ʿalā l-'arshi slawayta* See especially *Tā Hā* (20) 5, where the subject of *ʿalā l-'arshi slawayta* is *ar-rahimānu* There are other parallels in our text to the paragraph in *Tā Hā* which extends through verse 8 For *ʿalā l-'arshi slawayta* see also *al-A'raf* (7) 54, *Yūnus* (10) 3, *al-Ra'd* (13) 2, *al-Furqān* (25) 59, *al-Sajda* (32) 4, and *al-Hachd* (57) 4

⁴⁷ *taqdi wa-lā yuqdlā ʿalayka* cf. *al-Mu'min* (40) 20

⁴⁸ *taṣlaghnī annā* For God as the subject of *taṣlaghnā* see *al-Taghābun* (64) 6

⁴⁹ *qarībun*. See next note

⁵⁰ *muṣībun l-man dāʿaka* For this and the previous line cf. *al-Baqara* (2) 186 and *Hūd* (11) 61.

⁵¹ *rabbu kullī shay'in* cf. *al-An'am* (6) 164.

⁵² *khāṭiqu kullī shay'in*, cf. *al-An'am* (6) 102, *al-Ra'd* (13) 16, *al-Zumar* (39) 62, and *al-Mu'min* (40) 62.

⁵³ *wa-nshur alshinatānā* cf. *Tā Hā* (20) 27

soften our hearts,
 ʾ and lay open our breasts⁵⁴
 ʾ that we might praise your noble Name,
 which is exalted and great,⁵⁵
 blessed and holy!
 ʾ There is no God before you
 and no God after you.⁵⁶
 ʾ To you is the destiny [of all things],⁵⁷
 ʾ and all things are in the disposal of your power⁵⁸

This magnificent rhymed (*musajjaʿ*) introduction — which naturally suffers badly in translation — is full of Qurʾanic allusions, of which I have highlighted a few by providing the transliterated Arabic text and references in the notes.

Samir has stated that there is nothing explicitly Christian in this text,⁵⁹ a judgement with which I am in essential agreement. It does seem to me that the author has coined the three-fold title *ar-raḥīmu r-raḥmānu r-raḥīmu* as a subtle introduction to the chapter on the triunity of God that immediately follows this introductory prayer. One might also note that there are certain usages — for example, the predication of adjectives such as *ʾalī* and *ʾazīm* to God's *name* rather than to God himself — that are more Biblical than Qurʾanic. It is good to be reminded that the author is, after all, a Christian, and that he is at least as steeped in the language of the Bible as he is in that of the Qurʾān.⁶⁰ But that having been said, the text remains accessible to Muslims as well as Christians.

Furthermore, Samir notes that this accessibility is *not* the result of an author having superficially decked out a Christian text with Qurʾanic citations dug out of the eighth-century equivalent of a concordance.⁶¹

⁵⁴ *wa shrah sudūṭana* cf. *ʾa Ha* (20) 25

⁵⁵ *li-tasbiḥi smika l-kaṭīm l-ʾalī l-ʾazīm* cf. *al-Wāqia* (56) 74 and 96, *al-Ḥaqqā* (69) 52, and *al-Aʿlā* (87) 1

⁵⁶ *la ilāha qablaka wa-la ilāha baʿdaka* See next note

⁵⁷ *ilayka l-masīru* This exact form of words is found in *al-Baqara* (2) 285 and *al-Mumtahana* (60).4. For a parallel to the last three lines, see *al-Munim* (40) 3 *la ilāha illa huwa ilayhi l-masīru*.

⁵⁸ *wa-anta ʾala kulli shayʾ in qadrūn* That God is *ʾala kulli shayʾ in qadrūn* is stated 33 times in the Qurʾān. In *al-Imrān* (3) 26 and *al-Faḥr* (66) 8 we find, as in the Christian text, second person address: *innaka ʾala kulli shayʾ in qadrūn*. Sometimes *ʾala kulli shayʾ in qadrū* is rhymed with *(ilayka l ila ilāhi l ilayhi) l-masīru* *al-Baqara* (2) 284 85, *al-Imrān* (3) 28-29, *al-Maʾida* (5).18-19, and *al-Taḥabun* (64) 1-3 The English translation of *ʾala kulli shayʾ in qadrūn* is Kenneth Cragg's

⁵⁹ Samir, "Earliest Arab Apology," 69

⁶⁰ Sr Maria Gallo's annotations to her Italian translation of *Luthi* are rich in Biblical references. Maria Gallo, trans., *Palestinese anonimo Omelia arabo-cristiana dell' VIII secolo*, Collana di Testi Patristici 116 (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1994) For the opening prayer, see 47-51

⁶¹ Samir, "Earliest Arab Apology," 69-70

Indeed, as my annotations to the text should make plain, it is not just a word or two here or there that can be shown to have come from the Qurʾān; rather, the text simply *is* profoundly Qurʾanic, as we may sense when we read the first paragraph alongside *Tā Hā* (20):98, or when we compare the beautiful prayer beginning "Open our mouths. . ." with Moses' prayer in *Tā Hā* (20):25-35. In the introduction to *Tathlith* we are dealing with a Christian author who has absorbed the Qurʾān's vocabulary and cadences of worship and praise, and without a hint of affectation can make them his own.⁶²

3. Recasting narrative sequences

Fī tathlith Allāh al-wāhid is by no means wooden in the use it makes of the Qurʾān. Its magnificent opening prayer with all of its Qurʾanic echoes is followed by a chapter on the triunity of God, for which the author seeks Qurʾanic "proof texts": God's use of the pronoun "we" is appealed to as a proof of multiplicity within the divine unity,⁶³ while the fact that the Qurʾān speaks of God's Word and the holy Spirit⁶⁴ is taken as confirmation that the multiplicity is three-fold. In the chapter on redemption, however, this "prooftexting" use of the Qurʾān gives way to something much more interesting: allusions to the Qurʾanic stories of God's apostles and prophets.

Tathlith's redemption narrative begins, naturally enough for a Christian text, with the story of creation and fall.⁶⁵ While what the author relates is fundamentally the *Biblical* story — with the intention of describing humanity's fall into sin and death, thus to establish humanity's need for redemption — Qurʾanic detail, especially from the story of Adam in *al-ʿAraf* (7):19-25 or *al-Baqara* (2):35-36, is artfully woven into the narrative.⁶⁶ Phrase after phrase echoes the Qurʾān: *nafakha fīhi nasamata l-hayātī* ("He breathed into him the breath of life");⁶⁷ *askanahu l-jannata* ("He made him to dwell in the Garden");⁶⁸ *arāda [Iblīs] an yukhri jahumā min karāmati llāhi* ("[Iblīs] desired to expel them from the favor of God");⁶⁹ *fa-zayyana lahumā Iblīs wa-gharrahumā* ("Iblīs made it fair to them

⁶² Samir, "Apologie arabe," 97: "A mon avis, nous n'avons pas affaires ici à une exercice de style, mais à une pensée chrétienne qui s'est moulé dans le langage coranique."

⁶³ The author cites *al-Balad* (90):4, *al-Qamar* (54):11, and *al-An'am* (6):94; Gibson, *Arabic Version*, 77*.

⁶⁴ The author (mis-)cites *al-Nahl* (16):102.

⁶⁵ Gibson, *Arabic Version*, 78*-79*, or better Samir, "Earliest Arab Apology," 75-84.

⁶⁶ Noted by Samir, "Earliest Arab Apology," 75-81.

⁶⁷ Cf. *nafakha fīhi min rūḥi* in *al-Sajda* (32):9.

⁶⁸ Cf. *al-Baqara* (2):35 and *al-ʿAraf* (7):19.

⁶⁹ Cf. *akhrajahumā mimma kāna fīhī* in *al-Baqara* (2):36.

and deluded them"),⁷⁰ *badat lahumā saw'ātuhuma* ("their shameful parts were revealed to them").⁷¹

The paragraph on creation and fall sets a pattern for the brief narratives that follow. The story of *Noah* is the first to be told.⁷² While most of the detail is Biblical there is an emphasis on Noah's preaching activity — *kāna nūḥun ya'izuhum wa-yad'ūthum ilā -llāhi* ("Noah was exhorting them and calling them to God")—a prominent feature of the Qur'anic story, in which Noah is an apostle of God rejected by his people.⁷³ Next, Abraham is mentioned in passing as an example of the "friends of God"⁷⁴— and they were few in their days — [who] were warning [Satan-enslaved humanity] and calling them to God; but they met with severe tribulation and open hostility from them, from their kinfolk and others"⁷⁵—a fair summary of the Qur'anic story of Abraham.⁷⁶ The author's summary of the story of Lot⁷⁷ is faithful to the Bible, although the vocabulary—*al-fāḥish* ("indecency, abomination")⁷⁸ and *al-khabīth* ("wickedness")⁷⁹ to describe the acts of the people of Sodom; *maṭār* (the "rain" sent down upon the city);⁸⁰ *najjā* ("he rescued") for God's deliverance of Lot and his daughters⁸¹— overlaps with that of the Qur'ān's Lot-narratives. Furthermore, the apologist brings the paragraph to a close with a near-citation from the Qur'ān: *inna llāha ma'a l-ladhīna yattaqūnahu*, "truly God is with those who fear Him."⁸²

The paragraphs about Moses that immediately follow deserve to be presented in full:⁸³

Then Israel and his children entered Egypt: seventy-five souls, men, women, and children And God caused them to multiply and grow until they reached six hundred thousand and more.

⁷⁰ Cf. *al-Ḥijr* (15):39 Satan is frequently the subject of *ṣayyama* *al-An'am* (6) 43, *al-Anfāl* (8):48, *al-Nahl* (16):63, *al-Naml* (27):24, and *al-Ankabūt* (29) 38 With regard to *gharra*. Cf *dallāhumā bi ghurūḥin* in *al-A'raf* (7) 22

⁷¹ An exact citation from *al-A'raf* (7) 22

⁷² Gibson, *Arabic Version* 79*.

⁷³ See (among several examples) *al-A'raf* (7) 59 64, or all of *Sūra Nūḥ* (71)

⁷⁴ *asṭiyā'a llāhi*. Abraham's Qur'anic title, of course, is *khalīl [Allah]* "the friend" [of God]; *al-Nisā'* (4):125.

⁷⁵ Gibson, *Arabic Version* 80*.

⁷⁶ See, for example, *al-Anbiya'* (21) 51-70 or *al-Saffāt* (37) 83-98

⁷⁷ Gibson, *Arabic Version*, 80*.

⁷⁸ *fāḥisha* is used in the Lot-narrative in *al-A'raf* (7) 80, *al-Qasas* (28) 54 and *al-Ankabūt* (29):28

⁷⁹ The plural *al-khabā'ith* is used in the Lot-narrative in *al-Anbiya'* (21) 74

⁸⁰ Cf. *al-A'raf* (7):84, *al-Shu'ara'* (26) 173, *al-Naml* (27) 58, and also *al-Furqān* (25):40.

⁸¹ The second and fourth forms of the verbal root *نَجَّى* are a constant refrain in the Qur'ān's stories of the apostles With regard to Lot *al-Ḥijr* (15) 59, *al-Anbiya'* (21) 71 and 74, *al-Shu'ara'* (26):169-70, *al-Ankabūt* (29):32 33, *al-Saffāt* (37) 134, and *al-Qamar* (54) 34 (second form), and *al-A'raf* (7):83 and *al-Qasas* (28):53 (fourth form)

⁸² Cf. *inna llāha ma'a l-muttaqīna* in *al-Baqara* (2):194 and *al-Tiḥwa* (9):36 and 123

⁸³ For the following, see Gibson, *Arabic Version* 80*

There arose over Egypt another pharaoh, who had not known Joseph. He scattered them and put them to harsh toil. He wished to destroy the children of Israel, *and made himself a god*.⁸⁴ And he set them to work in difficult building projects, oppressed them with the harshest oppression, and murdered their sons. But God saved Moses, and the daughter of Pharaoh raised him.

The Children of Israel besought God to save them from the oppression they were experiencing from the hand of Pharaoh. And God responded to them and acquainted them with His mercy.

And Moses departed Egypt in flight, and God drove him until he reached Mount Sinai. *And God spoke to him directly*.⁸⁵ *"from the right side at the mount,"*⁸⁶ and said to him: "The lamentations of the Children of Israel have arisen to me, and the oppression with which Pharaoh and his folk have oppressed them."

And God sent him to Pharaoh, and supported him with signs [and] great wonders and mighty power. Then God split the sea for the Children of Israel, and caused them to pass through the midst of it; but he drowned Pharaoh and his host. *And God was Mighty, "Lord of Vengeance."*⁸⁷

In her translation of this passage, Sr. Maria Gallo puts the many *Biblical* citations or near-citations into italics.⁸⁸ I have adopted her idea, but for the Qur'anic allusions: the italicized phrases help us to see how skillfully the author has woven Qur'anic material into his précis of Exodus 1-14, bringing the whole to a suitable conclusion with a Qur'anic affirmation of God's avenging power.

It is time to pause and reflect on the author's strategy. It is clear that he has selected a sequence of figures common to the Bible and to the Qur'ān — Adam, Noah, (Abraham,) Lot, Moses — and while remaining faithful to the Bible has woven Qur'anic detail and vocabulary into his narrative. Furthermore, we note that the sequence is very profoundly a Qur'anic sequence: the stories of Noah, Lot, and Moses figure prominently in that genre of Qur'anic narrative that Montgomery Watt has labelled "punishment story," in which the apostle (*rasūl*) is sent to warn his people and call them to the worship of the true God. However, the people refuse the message and reject the apostle. God then punishes the unbelievers, but the apostle (and those with him) are saved.⁸⁹ In effect,

⁸⁴ This is an important feature of the Qur'ān's presentation of Pharaoh: *al-Shu'ara'* (26):29, *al-Qasas* (28):38, and *al-Nāzi'āt* (79):24.

⁸⁵ *fa-kallamahu llāhu taklīmān*, cf. *al-Nisā'* (4):164.

⁸⁶ *min jānibī t-tūri l-aymanī*, exactly as found in *Ala'yām* (19) 52.

⁸⁷ *wa-kāna llāhu shādīdan dhū nūqāmūn*, cf. *wa-inna llāha azīzun dhū nūqāmūn* in *Al-Imrān* (3):4, *al-Aḥzāb* (5):95, *Ibrāhīm* (14) 47, and *al-Zumar* (39) 37.

⁸⁸ Gallo, *Omelia*, 71-72.

⁸⁹ W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an* Islamic Surveys 8 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 127-35. See also Willem A. Bijlefeld, "A Prophet and More than a Prophet" *The Muslim World* 59 (1969) 1-28.

the Christian apologist has produced a kind of Christian calque on *al-A'raf* (7)⁹⁰ or *Hūd* (11) or one of the other suras in which the punishment stories play a dominant role.⁹¹

The decisive difference between the Qur'anic punishment-story sequences and *Tathlith's* Christian calque is their *telos*. As *Hūd* (11):120 states plainly, the Qur'anic sequences are related *in order to strengthen Muḥammad's heart*: the unbelief he encounters is by no means unprecedented, and he may trust in God for safety and vindication.⁹² The author of *Tathlith*, however, uses the sequence for his own apologetic purpose: *to establish the extent to which fallen humankind is under Satan's sovereignty, from which human apostles and prophets are incapable of saving them*. Even the Children of Israel miraculously delivered from Pharaoh and his hosts fell to worshipping the golden calf!⁹³ But if the Children of Israel, and indeed, all of humanity have fallen under Satan's sway,⁹⁴

God did not desire this for his creation,

and God is "the most merciful of those who show mercy"⁹⁵ to his creation,

and the one most fit to undertake their salvation⁹⁶
from the sedition⁹⁷ and misguidance⁹⁸ of Iblis.

God *himself* is "the one most fit to undertake" the salvation of humankind. The author of *Tathlith* has adapted the Qur'anic sequences of punishment stories by changing the accent, which no longer falls on the fact that the apostles were *vindicated* in the face of stubborn unbelief, but rather on the fact that human apostles did not effectively *overcome* that resistance. The Christian apologist recasts the Qur'anic sequences as a narrative of *human* incapacity to reform humankind— in order to prepare the reader to hear of a new initiative by the One who "has all things in the disposal of his power."⁹⁹

⁹⁰ *al-A'raf* presents the stories of Adam, Noah, Lot, and Moses in that order. The Christian apologist, of course, does not mention the stories of non-Biblical apostles (*Hūd*, *Sāliḥ*, *Shu'ayb*) that figure in the Qur'anic sequences.

⁹¹ E.g., *al-Aḥqāf* (23), *al-Shu'ara* (26), *al-Naml* (27), *al-Ankabūt* (29), and *al-Saffat* (37).

⁹² See Bylefeld, "Prophet?", 19–20.

⁹³ Gibson, *Arabic Version* 81*.

⁹⁴ For the following paragraph see *ibid.* 81*–82*.

⁹⁵ *arḥamā r-raḥimīn*. See note 45 above.

⁹⁶ *khalāṣahum wa-furqānahum*. The words are synonyms, *furqan* being used in its original Syriac sense. The same sense may underlie some of its uses in the Qur'ān: see *al-Baqara* (2):185 and *al-Anfal* (8):41.

⁹⁷ *fitna*, cf. *al-Hujj* (22):53.

⁹⁸ *ḡalḡla*, cf. *al-Nisā'* (4):60.

⁹⁹ See note 58 above.

4. *Listening to echoes*

Within a generation or so of the composition of *Tathlith*, another Melkite theologian pondered the question of how to present plausible arguments for the Incarnation in a rapidly Arabicizing and Islamicizing milieu. This was Theodore Abū Qurra, sometime monk of the *laura* of Mar Saba and bishop of Harrān, and the first writer of Arabic theological literature for whom we have a name.¹⁰⁰ Among his numerous Arabic apologetic works is a short treatise that might be entitled "On the Necessity of Redemption."¹⁰¹ In it, Abū Qurra begins immediately with a Qur'anically-colored statement that he believes a Muslim reader should be willing to accept: "God sent down (*anzala*) the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, and in it enjoined statutes upon the people, and imposed chastisements upon the one who violates them."¹⁰² Abū Qurra then radicalizes these statements: God's statutes demand the *perfection* of human obedience and love (Deuteronomy 6.5!), and *any* shortfall in this loving obedience is subject to punishment. There is no redress— "no, not for a twinkling of an eye of passing time"— for the one who fails to exert one's *entire* capacity in the obedience of God.¹⁰³

Abū Qurra then anticipates an objection: "I am able to throw off the chastisement for my transgression through repentance."¹⁰⁴ He responds that even in the unlikely case that the penitent achieved perfect obedience in the moment of repentance, *former* sins would still demand punishment:

[T]here is no way for you to blot out any of your former sin,
 not even an atom's measure [*wa-law miqdāra dharratin*]/!
 Thus it is inevitable that the punishment which overtakes you
 because of what your hands have forwarded [*bi-mā qaddamat yadāka*]/
 will be fixed upon you.
 You will not be able to remove it by any means!¹⁰⁵

Let us stop to ponder the two lines for which the transliterated Arabic text has been provided. In the first, it is undoubtedly anachronistic to have translated *dharrā* as "atom," although the classical lexicographers are agreed that it represents something exceedingly tiny, whether a small ant or an ant's grub or egg, or a tiny particle such as a mote in a ray of sunlight or a

¹⁰⁰ For an excellent recent summary of what is known about Abū Qurra, see Sidney Griffith, "Reflections on the Biography of Theodore Abū Qurrah," *Parole de l'Orient* 18 (1993): 143-70.

¹⁰¹ Constantin Basha, ed., *Les œuvres arabes de Théodore Aboucaras évêque de Haran* (Beirut: 1904), 83-91.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

single speck of gold dust.¹⁰⁶ The significance of Abū Qurra's use of the word is that his expression *miqdār dharra* "the measure of a *dharra*," recalls the Qur'ān's *miṭḥqāl dharra* "the weight of a *dharra*."¹⁰⁷ Where the context of the expression is a discussion of sin, one does not have to be a *ḥāfiẓ* to hear an echo of *Sūrat Zilzāl* (99):

When the earth is convulsed with her [final] earthquake
and earth brings forth her burdens,
and humankind says, 'What ails her?'—
on that Day she shall relate her chronicles as your Lord inspires her.
On that Day humans shall come forth in scattered groups to be shown
their works:
whoever has done an atom's weight of good shall see it,
and whoever has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it.¹⁰⁸

Other texts echoed by Abū Qurra's use of *miqdār dharra* include *Saba'* (34):3 or its parallel *Yūnus* (10):61. The former runs as follows:

The unbelievers say: The Hour will never come to us!
Say: Indeed, by my Lord, Knower of the Unseen, it shall come to you!
In the heavens and the earth *not an atom's weight escapes him*
—nor smaller than that, nor greater
but it is [recorded] in a Book that makes manifest

Abū Qurra has no need to belabor his point that former sin is not readily blotted out. For those with ears to hear them, the Qur'anic echoes are powerful and authoritative reminders that *all* is known, *all* is recorded, and that a terrible Day and Hour is coming when one shall be confronted with *all* one's deeds.

For those with ears to hear, the echoes *also* carry reminders of the fate of evil-doers. *Saba'* (34):3 is the first verse in a paragraph that warns, in verse 5, that those who strive against God's signs shall suffer "a torment of painful punishment." Similarly, *Yūnus* (10):61 — a close parallel to *Saba'* (34):3 — needs to be considered in its context. Memory leads to verse 52: "Then shall it be said to those who did evil: 'Taste the torment of eternity!'"

If the echoes of these terrible warnings are too distant for all to hear, Abū Qurra makes a second allusion to the Qur'ān which amplifies them: "Thus it is inevitable that the punishment which overtakes you 'because of what your hands have forwarded' will be fixed upon you!" *bi-mā*

¹⁰⁶ Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* 8 vols. (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1980, first publ. in Edinburgh, 1863), 957 (vol. 3), col. 2.

¹⁰⁷ The expression occurs six times: *al-Ḥaqq* (4):40, *Yūnus* (10):61, *Saba'* (34):3 and 22, and *Zilzāl* (99):7 and 8.

¹⁰⁸ The translations in this section are mine, although I have consulted and am indebted to those of Arberry and Cragg.

qaddamat yadāka is an exact citation from *al-Ḥajj* (22):9-10, where it is said of one who opposes the truth:

For him in this world
there is shame,
and on the Day of Resurrection
we shall make him taste the torment of the burning.
'That is *because of what your hands have forwarded*,
and because God is not unjust to his servants.'

Close parallels are found in *Āl ʿImrān* (3):181-82, *al-Anʿāl* (9):50-51, and *al-Nabaʾ* (78):40. This last is the concluding words of a sura that presents a stunning description of the Day, and deserves separate citation:

Lo, we have warned you of torment drawn nigh,
a Day when one shall behold *what one's hands have forwarded*,
and the unbeliever shall say, 'Would that I were dust!'

Abū Qurra clearly means for his reader to feel terror at the consequences of sin— but does not once use words such as "Hell", "Fire", "burning", or even (until later in the treatise) "torment". He does not need to. With a few well-chosen words his text has set off sympathetic resonances in numerous Qurʾanic texts that express — far more effectively than Abū Qurra could— terrible threats of everlasting punishment for evildoers.

Exploiting a typology

Toward the end of his seminal study *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Richard B. Hays attempts to "render a synoptic characterization of the overall relation between Scripture and Paul's reading of it" by adapting Thomas M. Greene's analysis (in *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*¹⁰⁹) of the ways in which Renaissance poets recapitulated classical models.¹¹⁰ Greene had summarized his findings under four headings:

- (a) "sacramental" or "reproductive" imitation, in which the subtext is treated as a model to be carefully imitated.
- (b) "eclectic" or "exploitative" imitation, in which the author makes no particular commitment to the subtexts, but treats them as repositories of language and symbols from which to draw.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982)

¹¹⁰ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture* 173-78

- (c) "heuristic" imitation, in which the poem "singles out one text as its putative genesis and . . . defines itself through its rewriting, its 'modernizing,' its *aggiornamento* of that text."¹¹¹
- (d) "dialectical" imitation, in which there is a real encounter and dialogue between the *mundus significans* of the poem and that of the subtext.¹¹²

As Hays points out, the variable in this spectrum of possibilities is "the writer's stance toward the past expressed in the symbolic world of the subtext."¹¹³ Does the writer return to the symbolic world of the subtext? Or *pick and choose* from that world? Does the writer *update* the subtext? Or *bring it into a conversation* in which it may speak freely?

Hays suggests that Greene's analysis may be fruitfully applied to any literature which is involved in intertextual reflection, and in fact applies it to the use of scripture in the letters of St. Paul.¹¹⁴ It seems to me that these categories are indeed useful for thinking about the use of the Qur'an in the early Arabic Christian apologies, or, for that matter, the use of the Bible in the early Islamic "refutation of the Christians" literature. Of course, there will be differences between the intertextual strategies found in these literatures and those found in the Renaissance poets (analyzed by Greene) or in the writings of Paul (analyzed by Hays). For the Renaissance poets, and for Paul, their subtexts were in some sense *authoritative*. The humanist writers regarded their classical subtexts with the profoundest admiration and respect; Paul regarded his subtext as sacred scripture. For Christian and Muslim controversialists and apologists, however, the other's scripture not only lacked authority but was profoundly questionable—at best, a mixture of truth and misinterpretation, corruption, and error. We shall need to keep this difference in mind as we attempt to apply the analysis of Greene (and Hays) to a very different set of texts.

Let us return to Greene's categories. Do we find examples of "sacramental" or "reproductive" imitation in Arabic Christian texts? I do not think it is far-fetched to speak of a "reproductive" approach to the Qur'an in a text such as the introduction to *Tathlith*, presented earlier.¹¹⁵ It may be worth nothing that Samir, who is undertaking the new edition of *Tathlith*, unaffectedly labels this introduction a *fatiha*, "like any *fatiha*, of an Arabic work,"¹¹⁶ but also, to a certain extent, like *the Fatiha*. Some Christian apologists found within the Qur'an a world of prayer and praise which they could happily visit, even if they would not settle there permanently.

¹¹¹ Greene, *Light in Troy*, 41, cited in Hays, *Echoes of Scripture* 173

¹¹² Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 173-74.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ See above, pp 305ff.

¹¹⁶ Samir, "Earliest Arab Apology," 66

We recall that "eclectic" or "exploitative" imitation refers to the intertextual approach of a poem that alludes to a variety of texts without binding itself to them. As Hays appropriates this category it may cover cases where an author has "borrowed" the language of scripture "to lend rhetorical force to his own discourse, with minimal attention to the integrity of the semeiotic universe of the precursor."¹¹⁷ Perhaps we may see such benignly "exploitative" imitation in *Tathlith's* use of near-Qur'anic phrases—"truly God is with those who fear Him" or "God was Mighty, Lord of Vengeance" to round off paragraphs.¹¹⁸ There is little indication that the Christian apologist was paying any particular attention to the original context of these phrases; he simply found them to be appropriate anti-phons to the narratives, respectively, of the rescue of Lot and his daughters, and the deliverance of Moses and the Children of Israel at the sea.¹¹⁹

However, the category of "exploitative" imitation may also include instances where the subtext has undergone a significant resignification. For a Biblical example, one may think of the citation of Hosea 11.1b in Matthew 2.15b: "Out of Egypt have I called my son."¹²⁰ Here Hosea's reference to the Exodus is reinterpreted as applicable to the return of the holy family after their flight into Egypt. The Islamic "refutation of the Christians" literature provides many examples of such resignification. In a recent article about the use of the Bible in early Islamic controversial literature,¹²¹ David Thomas has pointed to the use made by 'Alī b. Rabbān al-Ṭabarī (ca. 790-ca. 860) of Psalm 48.1-2, which 'Alī read something as follows:

Great is our Lord,
and he is greatly *maḥmūd* ("praised");
and in the city of our God and in his mountain
there is a holy one and a *muḥammad* ("praised one"),
and the joy hath come to the whole earth.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 175 Hays points to Paul's use of Psalm 19.4 in Romans 10.18 as a good example

¹¹⁸ See above, pp. 309-10

¹¹⁹ We might note, however, that *Tathlith's* description of God as *dhū nūqamīn* in the context of the story of Moses does parallel the Qur'an's use of the expression in the story of Abraham at *Ibrāhīm* (14):47

¹²⁰ See, for example, Craig A. Evans, "The Function of the Old Testament in the New," in Scot McKnight, ed., *Introducing New Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989), 174-76 Hays comments that Matthew's Gospel is "the clearest instance in the New Testament of a text whose hermeneutical strategy in relation to Israel's Scripture is almost unrelievedly exploitative, in Greene's sense" (Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 175)

¹²¹ David Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7 (1996): 29-38.

¹²² Thomas's translation in *ibid.*, 31-32 For the text of 'Alī's *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* see 'Ādil Nuwayhid, ed., *ʿAlī ibn Rabbān al-Ṭabarī, al-Dīn wa-l-dawla fī ihbāt nubuwwat al-nabī Muḥammad*, 3rd printing (Beirut: Dār al-āfaq al-jadīda, 1979).

For 'Alī, the verses are a clear prediction of the coming of the Prophet of Islam.

The Arabic Christian literature provides similar examples of an "exploitative" use of the Qur'anic subtext; and, as we have seen, the resignification of Qur'anic verses can be very arbitrary. When the author of the ancient controversial text preserved in *Papyrus Schott-Reinhardt* 438 cited *al-Zumar* (39):4, *al-Nisā'* (4):171, *al-Baqara* (2):116, and *al-Zukhruf* (43):81, he paid no attention to the original context of the Qur'anic verses; or, if he did notice their context, that did not prevent him from tearing them violently out of that context in order to make them say the opposite of what all Muslims have understood them to say!¹²³ It is worth noting that this sort of violently arbitrary "prooftexting" probably stretches the category of "exploitative" imitation beyond its scope in the work of Greene or Hays. Here the text does not reverence the subtext, but merely attempts, by force, to take it captive.

As for interreligious "heuristic" imitation, Thomas gives us an excellent example from the early Islamic controversial literature: *al-Radd 'alā l-naṣārā* ("The Refutation of the Christians") of al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (785-860), which includes a rhymed, carefully edited Arabic reworking of the first eight chapters of Matthew's Gospel.¹²⁴ Al-Qāsim treats his original with considerable respect, and yet "Islamicizes" the text by "toning down excessive [Christian] claims and removing what cannot be modified."¹²⁵ Matthew's gospel is brought "up to date" in the light of the Qur'anic revelation.

Perhaps we find something similar in the soteriological chapter of *Tathlith*,¹²⁶ where we have suggested that, after a presentation of the story of Adam, the author has imitated typical Qur'anic sequences of "punishment stories." (*Sūra al-A'raf* (7), where such a sequence is prefaced with the story of Adam, provides the closest model.) But the Christian apologist reworks this sequence, reading the Qur'ān *as if* it were a pre-Muḥammadan, indeed, pre-Easter text. The writer finds the telos of the sequence of apostle-stories *not* in the (seventh-century) figure of Muḥammad, but rather in the (first-century) figure of Christ, understood to be the incarnate Word of God who accomplished what prophets and apostles could not. The Qur'anic subtext is "updated" by identifying in it trajectories which reach their goal only when pulled into a Christian gravitational field.

¹²³ See above, pp. 304-5

¹²⁴ Thomas, "Bible," 32-36. For the text of the *Radd* see I. Di Matteo, "Confutazione contro i cristiani dello Zaydita al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 9 (1921-22) 301-64.

¹²⁵ Thomas, "Bible," 36.

¹²⁶ See above, pp. 308-11.

The use of *al-Shūrā* (42):51 that we encountered in Chapter 18 of *al-Jāmi'*¹²⁷ may provide another example of a heuristic reading of the Qur'anic subtext. I suggested earlier that the allusion should not be dismissed as "prooftexting" — that is, *al-Jāmi'*'s reading of *al-Shūrā* (42):51 is not merely (and violently) "exploitative." I prefer to see *al-Jāmi'* as "updating" *al-Shūrā* (42):51 — although in the anachronistic "christotelic" sense just described — by taking God's speaking "from behind a veil" to refer not only to God's speech to *Moses* (as agreed in the classical Islamic exegetical tradition) but also to God's speech to humankind through *Christ*.

It is the fourth category, "dialectical" imitation, that Hays finds most helpful for understanding the hermeneutical strategy of Paul. The apostle to the Gentiles does *not* read scripture as does (for example) the author of the letter to the Hebrews, with a heuristic "then/now," "type/fulfillment" scheme in mind. Rather, he allows scripture to speak with its own voice and even to contend against his appropriation of it.¹²⁸ Once again we need to stretch the category in order to use it for the writings of Christian apologists citing a subtext about which they had profound reservations: no medieval Christian apologist would allow the Qur'ān entire freedom to speak! Notwithstanding, we may perhaps see something approaching a "dialectical" approach to the Qur'anic subtext when Christian writers deal with it allusively, allowing it to speak with some freedom from afar rather than constraining or censoring its speech at close range. We have seen something like this in the allusions of *al-Burhān* and *Alasā'il* to *al-Shūrā* (42):51.¹²⁹ And Theodore Abū Qurra's text "On the Necessity of Redemption" supplies us with a splendid example:¹³⁰ Abū Qurra, arguing that "repentance" is not sufficient to efface past sins, makes his case *not* with paragraph upon paragraph of supporting argument, but rather with a pair of extremely brief (near-) Qur'anic expressions: *miqdār dharra* and *bi-mā qaddamat yadāka*. Suddenly (for the competent reader) the room is filled with echoes of the Qur'ān's vivid and terrifying affirmations of the omniscience of God, of the coming Day when one shall be confronted with all one's deeds, and of the "torment of the burning" for those who have done evil. Abū Qurra's allusive "distancing" of the Qur'anic subtext gives it permission to speak — and it does so, with great eloquence and power for those qualified to hear.

¹²⁷ See above, pp. 299-300.

¹²⁸ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 176-77 (although this point is the burden of the entire book).

¹²⁹ See above, pp. 300-2.

¹³⁰ See above, pp. 312ff

Conclusion: beyond prooftexting

One of the surprises of the earliest Arabic Christian literature is that its treatment of the Qurʾān is far more varied, subtle, and interesting than can be summed up under a heading such as “prooftexting.” Although we must concede that an arbitrary and even violent “exploitative” intertextual strategy characterizes the oldest Arabic Christian apologetic text in our possession (*Papyrus Schott-Reichard* 438) — and many other texts since then! — we have discovered the existence of very different approaches, ones that move in the direction of greater appreciation of and respect for the language, narratives, and teachings of the Qurʾān. Already in the second Islamic century,¹³¹ arabophone Christians were learning to pray using Qurʾanic turns of phrase; to relate God’s dealing with humankind in narrative with Qurʾanic accents; and to construct theological arguments leaving spaces to be filled with Qurʾanic echoes. In its use of the Qurʾān, the earliest Arabic Christian literature pointed the way beyond prooftexting — surely one of this literature’s many gifts to contemporary Christian-Muslim dialogue.

*Luther Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota*

MARK N. SWANSON



¹³¹ This is, of course, a somewhat approximate statement. We do not know, for example, when Theodore Abū Qurra (who lived for more than a decade into the *third* century A.H.) wrote his treatise “On the Necessity of Redemption.”

MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN THE PANCASILA STATE OF INDONESIA

Introduction

In the summer of 1997 the worst forest fires since memory caused an ecological disaster that not only hurt Indonesia but also its neighbors Singapore and Malaysia. Several months later a monetary crisis caused the fall of Indonesia's currency, the rupiah, to about 20% of its previous value against the dollar. Before these two dramatic developments shocked the pride of the young "Asian tiger," in February-March 1997, the Christian Churches issued two public statements which already spoke of concern and anxiety. On 27 March the Protestant Churches, in a rare united statement by the Council of Ecumenical Churches, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, the Salvation Army and the Seventh Day Adventists, declared their concern over the bloody fights between Christian Dayaks and migrant Madurese Muslims on the island of Kalimantan, and the partial or complete destruction of more than one hundred churches, mostly on Java, where in the cities many congregations have a great percentage of rather prosperous Chinese merchants in their flock:

Although some want to see these riots as interreligious conflicts, or as clashes between tribes and races, we do not consider these events as a battle between Christians and Muslims, or between Dayaks and Madurese, or even between indigenous Indonesians against non-indigenous persons of Chinese descent. These events of unrest and strife are in fact planned by certain elements who -- as a means to reach their goals -- seek to disrupt the unity of society by making use of critical conditions among our people in order to destroy the foundations of Pancasila and the Constitution of 1945.

We are really impressed and consoled to see that Muslim co-patriots join us in efforts to overcome these hardships and damages and even work together to restore the churches and other demolished buildings.¹

Already on 1 February 1997 Cardinal Julius Darmaatmadja, archbishop of Jakarta and head of the Council of Indonesian Catholic Bishops, had issued his pre-Easter Pastoral Letter. This document also avoided the interpretation of the frightening events as interreligious conflicts.

¹ Statement of 27 March 1997, published in Paul Tahalele & Thomas Santoso, *Beginkah Kemerdekaan Kita?* [Is this our Freedom?] (Surabaya: Forum Komunikasi Kristiani Indonesia, 1997), 201-14.

Darmaatmadja stressed the growing conflicts between rich and poor, between an authoritarian bureaucracy and the call for democracy. The drastic and violent measures against the strongest opposition party, the PDI (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*) on 27 July 1996 were for him the beginning of the long list of the public evils of Indonesian society. The cardinal called for a moral revival in order to overcome this spiral of corruption, oppression and violence.

The intricate relationship between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia is for many an issue of growing concern. Are we witnessing an increase of intolerance on the Muslim side and the end of religious freedom for Christians in the world's largest country with a majority of Muslims? Or should we consider the sad events of the last years against the background of a general deterioration of the social, political and economic situation in the last days of General Suharto's New Order, which started in 1966? In seeking to answer these questions, we'll consider first the universal religions of Islam and Christianity amidst other variants of religion in the country. In the second part of this article we will have a closer look at Muslim-Christian relations in a stricter sense.

I. Universal Religions of Indonesia's Religious Scene

Indonesia, the largest state in Southeast Asia, counted in 1998 202 million citizens. According to official statistics, 87% of them were Muslim, 6% Protestant, 3% Catholic, 2% Hindu (mostly Balinese) 0.9% Buddhist (mostly Chinese) and about 1% "other religions". This makes five officially recognized religions, with the somewhat strange construction of Protestantism and Catholicism designated as distinct religions, probably to make the number of five complete. 'Other religions' are not specified in these statistics, but they are mostly understood to be the tribal or traditional religions. For the last category sometimes the terminology of *belum beragama* is used, the one who "has not yet opted for a (world) religion." There seem to be few countries where the universal religions, "the longest lasting of civilization's primary institutions," were and are so successful.² During the process of the promulgation of independence, on 17 August 1945, the ideological foundation of the republic was defined as *Pancasila*, the Five-Pillar-Doctrine of Belief in the One and High Deity, Humanitarianism, Nationhood/Nationalism, Peoplehood and Social Justice. This choice

² Robert W. Hefner, "Introduction: World Building and the Rationality of Conversion," in his *Conversion to Christianity. Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 34. Hefner, a specialist on Indonesia, presents in this work also a case-study of twentieth century "Christian Conversion in Muslim Java": 99-125.

certainly has to be seen as a compromise between the option for an Islamic State on the one hand and for that of secularism on the other.³

A few observations on the Hindu and Buddhist traditions in Indonesia must suffice here. Balinese Hinduism had to adjust to the national criterion of a universal religion. Therefore the belief in God's unity became emphasized, Manu was accepted as a prophet and his *Manava Dharmaśāstra* recognized as part of Hindu scripture, although parts of the Upanishad and texts like the *Bhagavadgītā* play often a more important role in contemporary Neo-Hinduism in Bali. Until the 1940s holy scripture in Balinese Hinduism was transmitted in the form of sacred texts in Old-Javanese. But the new religious politics have necessitated considerable changes in doctrine, especially as taught in primary and secondary schools and at the theological college of the *Institut Hindu Dharma* in Denpasar since 1963. The traditional rituals, which make Bali such an attractive and important destination for international tourism, continue as before and show only slight alterations.⁴

The Chinese community of Indonesia, roughly estimated as 3-4% of the population, gradually tended towards acceptance of Christianity, especially after the ban on communism as a result of the 1965 coup. A small minority amongst the Chinese have embraced Islam. Confucianism was not recognized as a religion and therefore no marriages according to Confucian ritual can be celebrated. A new reformation of Buddhism, inspired by some monks from Thailand, created a similar renewal as with neo-Hinduism in Bali. In the Chinese Buddhist temples there is still room for Taoist and Confucianist rituals, besides rituals of Mahayana Buddhism, but the weekly program of Buddhism on state television is conducted by Theravada monks in their orange robes. At Waiçak (the Birthday of the Buddha) and other neo-Buddhist festivals there is a competition in the reading of the Buddhist Pali scripture, not much different from the popular Muslim competition in Qur'ān recitation.⁵

The Australian/Pakistani sociologist Riaz Hassan, who served during the 1980s as a visiting professor in Yogyakarta, concluded that there was

³ A few titles out of the vast library on Pancasila: Susan Selden Purdy, "Legitimation of Power and Authority in a Pluralistic State: Pancasila and Civil Religion in Indonesia" (Ph D., Columbia University: University Microfilms, 1985); Eka Darmaputera, *Pancasila and the Search for Identity and Modernity in Indonesian Society*; (Leiden: Brill, 1988); Karel A. Steenbrink, "Indonesian Politics and a Muslim Theology of Religions 1965-1990," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 4 (1993): 223-46

⁴ Clifford Geertz, "'Internal Conversion' in Contemporary Bali," in his *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1964 and later), 170-89; F. L. Bakker, *The Struggle of the Hindu Balinese Intellectuals. Developments in Modern Hindu Thinking in Independent Indonesia* (Amsterdam: V.U. University Press, 1993)

⁵ Personal observation at the Buddhist monastery of Mendut, near the great shrine of Borobudur, Waiçak 1994

not only a revival of Islam in Indonesia, but a clear and manifest flowering of all universal religions, due to strong and persistent government support of religion in general and the wide-spread approval of this policy in society.⁶

Amidst this religious boom, not only the tribal religions but also the new religious sects / mystical movements, commonly called *aliran kepercayaan* ("faith movements") face a somewhat uncertain existence. They are not recognized as formal religions, but as branches or subsystems within the major five traditions. This has led David Barrett to a statistical overview that is quite different from the official one quoted above. In his well-known *World Christian Encyclopedia*, published in 1982, Barrett has 43.2% Muslims, 36.4% 'New-Religionists', 11% Christians (among whom 2.5% crypto-Christians), 5.1% tribal religions, 2.1% Hindus and 1.0% Buddhists. The most interesting (and astonishing!) feature in this listing is the 36.4% New Religionists. Barrett labels the majority of this group as "followers of new Muslim or islamized and hinduized syncretistic religions."⁷

It is undoubtedly true that the official statistics of the Indonesian census do not mirror the reality of religious affiliations in Indonesia. But Barrett's model is a very unsatisfactory alternative. In order to do justice to the complexity of religious identity in Indonesia, one needs to understand the universal religions, such as Islam and Christianity, in their inter-relatedness and interaction with both the cultural religion of *adat* (traditional customs) and the civil religion of Pancasila.

Complex Religious Identities

One of the most restricting regulations of modern Indonesia is the ban on what is called SARA. Issues of *Suku* (tribe), *Agama* (religion), *Ras* (race) and *Antargolongan* (differences between social and ethnic groups) are prohibited as topics in the media and in social and political discourse. In the vast archipelago, with its many islands, tribes, languages and cultures, the Indonesian state wants to create a modern and stable nation with a firm national cohesion. One of the aspects of the ideology of Pancasila is the promotion of this national unity. In this respect Indonesia is probably closer to the countries and cultures of the Far East than to the Islamic heartland of the Middle East. The national civil religion of Pancasila has been compared with the function of Shintoism in Japan and Confucianism in China. Pancasila provides a social and political ethics, which is taught in all schools, from *Kindergarten* until the first year of undergraduate study at universi-

⁶ Riaz Hassan, *Islam Dari Konservatisme sampai Fundamentalisme* (Jakarta: Rajawali, 1985), 147-60.

⁷ David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World AD 1900-2000* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 382.

ties. Pancasila also provides a series of national rituals: on the seventeenth of every month schools and other public buildings celebrate a flag ceremony that lasts about thirty minutes and includes singing of the national anthem, reading of the text of the Pancasila, solemn oaths, and hoisting of the flag. There are also 'holy men and women' through the institution of national heroes. Klaus Schreiner, son of a Lutheran missionary, compared them to the saints in the Catholic church, both in the process of 'beatification' and in their role in the community.⁸ A whole calendar of memorial days has been established, related to events in the young Republic or to special topics. Some among them are: 3 January in commemoration of the foundation of the Ministry of Religion, 11 March when President Suharto received power from his predecessor Soekarno, and 20 May for the foundation of Budi Utomo, the first nationalist organization. With "its own set of sacred persons, events, beliefs, rituals and symbols quite distinct from those of the denominations," Pancasila is a (civil) religion in its own right.⁹

Islam offers few rituals for the turning points of life, at birth, marriage, and funeral, and this may have been the reason why regional customs (*adat*) continue as *rites de passage*, besides the more simple Muslim rituals. Although integrated in a Muslim life-style, they never fully become part of the Islamic duties and Christians may easily join or take over some of this *adat*. Traditional healing is also common for Muslims and Christians alike. Chinese without an explicit affiliation to a world religion as well as some Christians visit Muslim shrines. Similarly, a growing number of Catholic places of pilgrimage (where usually the holy virgin Mary is the center of the cult) are visited by non-Catholic Chinese and also by a number of Muslims. Common people go to shrines and graves for their daily needs, hoping for improved physical health, seeking to find a partner for marriage, or searching for a better job. At the cultural level, the arrival of Islam did not abolish the shadow play, *wayang*, where the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata are performed. Only very strict Muslims voice objections to this classical theater, sometimes played by human dance figures. Wayang performances remain generally appreciated by people from various religious backgrounds. These classical plays are not performed in modern Indonesian, but in the language of the region, and Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese and Banjarese have in this field the strongest traditions. While the civil religion of Pancasila holds its rituals during office hours, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., the sacred time for pilgrimage and wayang-play or a visit to graves is the night. Traditional healing and

⁸ Klaus H. Schreiner, *Politischer Heldenkult in Indonesien Tradition und Moderne Praxis* (Berlin: Reiner, 1995).

⁹ For this definition see Donald G. Jones and Russel E. Richey, *American Civil Religion* (New York: Harper, 1974), 6.

slametan, meals which bring neighborhoods together before planting and after harvest, at *rites de passage* and at other special occasions, are also part of this regional and traditional religion.

Occasionally traditional religion comes in conflict with official religion. Of special importance in this connection is the reformist *Muhammadiyah*, established in 1912 and claiming some three million active members and some thirty million sympathizers. It is the founder of many schools, from Kindergarten to vocational schools and rich universities, of several local independent (more or less 'denominational') mosques,¹⁰ of small maternity homes as well as fully equipped modern hospitals, of credit unions and other institutions. From its beginning the movement was an opponent of this 'syncretist and corrupt' religion.¹¹ But Muhammadiyah Islam remained a minority in Indonesia and traditional religion survived besides official Islam. At the Christian side, some Evangelical Christians also see problems with the Pancasila civil religion as well as with some aspects of *adat*.

This configuration of popular religious values and practices, partly based on the age-old wisdom of *adat*-sayings and covering a wide field of activities, from the shamanist healing of the *dukun* to the complicated rituals of marriage, funeral and the *slametan* religious meal, is a particular religious phenomenon, clearly distinct from the relatively new national civil religion of Pancasila and the formal universal religions. The *Malay Law* already formally recognized the co-existence of the strict rules of Islamic law and *adat* rulings. These written procedures for the courts in the sultanate of Malacca and later (after 1511) Johore repeatedly mention an *adat* prescription besides and in contrast with another ruling "according to the law of God Most High."¹²

The earlier mentioned suggestion of a comparable role of the Pancasila in Indonesia and the teaching of Confucianism in traditional China seems to make sense particularly with regard to the field of ethics. Confucianism provided standards of conduct for social and political life, just as Pancasila does in Indonesia. But for answers to questions concerning the hereafter

¹⁰ Muhammadiyah introduced some reformations in the ritual, it moved the direction of prayer from a simple West to a more precise North-West, it reduced the length of the *tarawih* prayer in the month of Ramadan, held sermons in local languages and urged the imam to use the proper pronunciation of Arabic. Because of difference of opinion with traditional mosque leaders, usually nominated by the heads of villages or regents of towns, Muhammadiyah started its own *musalla*.

¹¹ Mitsuo Nakamura, *The Crescent arises over the Banyan Tree. A Study of the Muhammadiyah in a Central Javanese Town* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1983); James Peacock, *Purifying the Faith: The Muhammadiyah Movement in Indonesian Islam* (Menlo Park: Cummings, 1978).

¹² Liaw Yock Fang, *Undang-undang Melaka. The Laws of Melaka* (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 39.

or problems of serious sickness and death, the Chinese sought counsel from the Buddha, just as in Indonesia for most people the doctrines of Islam and other world religions provide solutions to these problems. The third current within traditional China, Taoism, is comparable to what takes place in Indonesia outside the reach of bureaucrats and formal religious leaders, school curriculum and religious writings. This is what the various regional and local cultures honor through old practices, remnants of animism, a variety of magical rites and beliefs, and an almost completely secularized folklore, now promoted by the Minister of Culture and his colleague of Tourism.

In the past missionaries and scholars have argued that the form in which Islam reached Indonesia, through traders from India, was from the beginning 'impure.' Both observers from outside and reformist Muslims themselves (especially persons of the Muhammadiyah movement) considered a majority of Indonesian Muslims as only partially converted: through the holes in their Muslim clothes the animist or Hindu-Buddhist past was still easily perceived. But this notion of a partial or unfinished conversion to world religions does not properly describe religiosity in Indonesia. The concept of a complex religious identity is much more constructive to depict the real situation.

There was certainly since 1965, during the Suharto regime, a revival of mosque attendance, an extraordinary increase in institutes of Islamic learning, partly attached to the formal state system of primary and secondary education, but also including mosque classes for children and adults. The Ministry of Religion, about which more will be said below, organizes and finances the obligatory religious education for all five religions as well as the bureaucracy for Islamic courts (with about 50% women judges, because of the traditional high position of women in the country) and the administration of marriages, divorces and sometimes also inheritance. Religious organizations had to stay out of party politics more and more as time went on. In 1973 the nearly one hundred political parties of the Soekarno period, after 1965 already reduced to nine, had to merge again in two blocks. The four Muslim parties united in the PPP (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, United Party for Development). Initially it still used the Ka'bah as its symbol to show its Muslim identity. But after the 1982 general elections also this last connection between Islam and politics had to be abandoned and the star (symbol of God's unity in the Pancasila symbolism) became the sign for PPP. The Catholic and Protestant political parties had to merge with other parties into the earlier mentioned PDI, which never had a clear religious affiliation. During the Dutch colonial period the general policy towards Islam was a brutal and firm suppression of any political activity from Muslim groups, but it was accompanied by a rigorous abstinence from any interference in the 'strictly religious,' that is

in ritual and doctrinal affairs. This has changed in that religion in modern Indonesia is, as we have seen, much more positively supported by the government, with the understanding that it has to refrain from any political activity. This is not only true for Muslims but also for Christians. There have been Indonesian Christian (and Muslim!) theologians who wanted to introduce elements of the Latin American theology of liberation into their country, but several books on this topic were banned and most theologians accommodated by opting for a 'theology of development' as their theme.¹³

The complexity of religious identities sometimes brings with it a feeling of harmony in a pluriform culture, but at other times it leads to conflicts. On the eve of the 1955 elections, when religious relations became intrinsically intertwined with the political power play, the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz carried out his field research in East Java. At that time he proposed a three-fold division of Muslims in that region: the majority of Javanese in the popular religion of *abangan*, the stricter Muslims of *santri*, and the elite religiosity of the nobility, the *priyayi*.¹⁴ This division was criticized because it overstated the impact of social conflicts on religious issues. Moreover, this tripartite model failed to do justice to the complex religious identity which was and is the reality for the majority of the population of Java and Indonesia in general.¹⁵ Geertz's image of a far-going polarization was probably valid for the time of his research in the early 1950s, when *abangan* were associated with the PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, the Communist Party), *santri* with the Muslim parties of *Masyumi* or *Nahdlatul 'Ulamā'*, and the *priyayi* with the Nationalist Party *PNI*. However, from the 1970s onward, with a government policy of de-politicization of religion, the situation has changed radically in this respect.

The *aliran kepercayaan*, labeled by Barrett as "New religionists," grew in the 1920s and 1930s as a result of a tendency towards stricter orthodoxy of some branches of Islam. The Muhammadiyah endeavor to promote a purer Islam (under the slogan: "Back to the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth") also had its unwanted side-effects: the formation of independent 'new' religious movements such as the Pangestu, Subud, Sapta Dharma, Sumarah, Darmais and many others. Until the first decades of the twentieth century, local and regional mystical movements could flourish under the more general umbrella of Islam, but the stricter formulation of Islamic doctrines and practices made this impossible or at least much more difficult. Al-

¹³ K. Steenbrink "Seven Indonesian Perspectives on Theology of Liberation", in G. De Sothrijuer, ed., *Theology of Liberation in the Postmodern World* (Louvain: Centre for Liberation Theology, forthcoming).

¹⁴ Clifford Geertz, *Religion of Java* (New York: Glencoe, 1960).

¹⁵ Harsja W. Bachtiar, *The Religion of Java a Commentary* (Jakarta: Bhratara, 1973)

ready in the 1920s the conflict between stricter Islam and mystical movements sharpened,¹⁶ and a few decades later the independent Republic of Indonesia did not give room to these movements. Some lawyers and politicians claimed that they were covered by Par. 29 of the Constitution:

1. The State is Based upon (belief in) the One and High Deity.
2. The state will guarantee to all inhabitants the freedom to adhere to their respective religion and to fulfill their religious duties in conformity with that religion and that faith (*menurut agamanya dan kepercayaannya itu*).

There has been a long debate whether religion (*agama*) and faith (*kepercayaan*) are identical, but about 1970 a consensus grew that *kepercayaan* is a current within a religion. From the beginning of the establishment of the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, on 3 January 1946, these 'new religions' had a delicate position in the structure of the ministry or were wholly excluded. Between 1952-1967 a sub-section within the ministry dealt with them, but already in 1960 a joint committee of the Ministry of Religion and the Ministry of Justice was formed apparently in order to control these movements, considered as a potential danger for religion and the state. After the 1965 coup, the anti-communist concern became more obvious. In the 1967 structure of the Ministry of Religion there was no more room for these movements, which were now registered by the Ministry of Education and Culture, sometimes receiving subsidies, but more often experiencing a very restrictive control.¹⁷

The few examples given above illustrate the dynamic situation that exists between the universal religion of Islam and the animistic or mystical movements and traditions. On the other side, examples could also be given of tensions between the universal and the civil religions. After the 1965 coup the Muslims welcomed the revival of Pancasila as the guarantee for freedom of religion and as a partner in the fight against communism. When in the late 1970s Pancasila became more and more important and in the 1980s even was imposed as "the sole basis for all social and political organizations," Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul 'Ulamā' as well as the National Council of Churches had to change their constitutions in order to give the Pancasila a prominent place. As a result critical voices were heard complaining that Islam or Christianity were to become substituted by the civil religion of Pancasila.¹⁸

¹⁶ G.W.J. Drewes, "The Struggle between Javanism and Islam as Illustrated by the Serat Dermagandul," *Bijdragen van het Koninklijk Instituut* 124 (1966): 309-65.

¹⁷ B.J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 166-68; P. Stange, "Legitimate Mysticism in Indonesia," *Review of Indonesian and Malay Affairs*, 20/2 (1986): 76-117; Karel A. Steenbrink, "Het Indonesisch Godsdienstministerie en de Godsdiensten," *Werkd en zending* 1 (1972): 174-99.

¹⁸ Karel A. Steenbrink, "Pancasila: Entwicklungen innerhalb der civil religion Indonesiens," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 74 (1990): 124-41.

The tensions between the three modes of religion described above were basically between uneven partners, because animistic/mystical religiosity, the universal religions and the civil religion of Pancasila all had their specific areas of concern and interest. Within the universal religions, and especially Islam and Christianity, there was a greater potential for conflict since people had to be either Muslim or Christian (or Hindu, or Buddhist). In school, children had to follow religious classes according to their own (or their parents') religion. For marriage ceremonies also exclusive choices had to be made. In this situation Christianity and Islam often seemed to be competing forces, leading to a sense of rivalry. Whereas in the case of Christianity and Islam no double loyalty and identity are possible; at least not in the public sphere, this is different for the civil religion and the *adat* traditions: in the dynamics of religious relations and within the sphere of the complex religious identity, the observation and practice of these traditions are clearly not mutually exclusive.

II. Muslims and Christians in the 1990s

*The Religious Politics of the New Order Government of Haji Muhammad*¹⁹ Suharto: 1965-1998.

The ban of the (not outspokenly atheist, but certainly not religious) Communist Party of Indonesia was one of the first measures of the Suharto Government after the formal transfer of power on 11 March 1966.²⁰ This resulted also in a revival of all universal religions in the country and especially in mass conversions of many nominal Muslims, now ex-communists, to Christianity.²¹ A combination of growing self-confidence of Muslims, in combination with the new conversions and increasing public activities of Christians, resulted in riots in Macassar (now Ujung Pandang) 1 October 1967, damaging the furniture in several churches.²² The government convoked an interreligious consultation in Jakarta, 30 November 1967, and proposed that the religions should declare that they would not take the believers of other universal religions as the object of their missionary activities. Christian missionary activities and Muslim *dakwah* (*da'wa*) should

¹⁹ As many Indonesians, President Suharto only had one name until he performed the *bay'an* in June 1991. Since that date he sometimes uses formally the additional name of Muhammad.

²⁰ General Suharto came to power immediately after the failure of a communist coup on 30 September 1965, but he received authority in a formal way only on 11 March 1966. For a short survey of the political history see M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Indonesia* (London: Macmillan, 1981).

²¹ There are no exact figures of the conversions during this period. A rather sensational account is given by Avery T. Wilks Jr., *Indonesian Revival: Why Two Million Came to Christ* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1978).

²² Boland, *The Struggle of Islam* 230-31.

only be directed at deepening the faith of adherents of one's own religion. The Muslim party was willing to formally enunciate such a statement, and the declaration was prepared by the Muslim Minister of Religion, K.H.M. Dachlan. But Catholics and Protestants reconfirmed the missionary character of their faith and renounced the declaration against proselytism. The chairman of the Protestant Council of Churches, retired general T.B. Simatupang, "fought as a lion to defend his Christian position," while the Catholic representative, Ben Mang Reng Say, wholeheartedly agreed with his Protestant colleague, but remained mostly silent.²³

The 1967 Jakarta meeting demonstrates constraint as the basic goal of the government policy in establishing interreligious harmony. One of the causes of the 1967 riots in Macassar was the complaint about the construction of a great church building in front of the central mosque. A joint instruction by the Minister of Religion and the Minister of Internal Affairs, dated 13 September 1969, determined that new religious buildings would be subject to strict rules. For any new construction the permit of the governor of the province should be obtained, and any problem should be reported to the national ministry in Jakarta. One of the most striking rules is that a religious building should serve the local community that lives in the neighborhood of the (new) building. No new places of worship should be built amongst a community of another faith. In later specifications it was added that no private houses should be used as places of worship or transformed into such buildings.²⁴

By two decrees of the Minister of Religion, 15 August 1978, restrictive regulations were issued concerning the propagation of religion. Decree no. 70 in fact made the proposal of the 1967 meeting a government rule:

In order to guarantee the national stability and to foster the harmony between the religious communities, the propagation and spread of religion have to be executed in a spirit of mutual understanding and respect for the feelings of the other party. Religious communities have to recognize and honor each other in accordance with the spirit of the Pancasila. The propagation of religion is not allowed: a) when it is directed towards persons who already adhere to another religion; b) when it is executed through gifts, money, clothes, food and drinks, drugs and similar means, which are used in order that a person feels

²³ A lively description of this dramatic event by Anwar Haryono, "Prof. Dr. H.M. Rasjidi Pengungkap Gamblang Hubungan Antaragama di Indonesia," in Endang Basri Ananda, ed., *70 Tahun Prof. Dr. H.M. Rasjidi* (Jakarta: Pelita, 1985), 153-66, the Protestant professor Ihromi, who published also a contribution in this *Festschrift* for Rasjidi, does not mention this event, although he speaks about interreligious relations, *ibid.*, 167-71. Cf. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam*, 234.

²⁴ For this and other decisions see Sudjangi, *Kompilasi Peraturan Perundang-undangan Kerukunan Hidup Umat Beragama* (Jakarta: Departemen Agama RI, 5th ed. 1996).

attracted to embrace a religion; c) when it happens through the distribution of pamphlets, bulletins, books etc. in regions or houses of adherents of other religions; d) when it happens, under any motivation, through house to house visits, addressing people who already adhere to another religion.

An additional decree, no 77/1978, contained regulations about foreign support to religions in Indonesia. No expatriate missionaries could receive work permits if they came to spread their religion, and foreign workers in other fields were no longer allowed to be active in religious fields save in a few exceptional cases.

There was broad support from the Muslim community for these regulations (although there were rumors that one of the causes for it was foreign - Libyan - support for fundamentalist Muslim groups), but Christians were anxious and sometimes even angry. There were comments about "freedom of religion under fire."²⁵ The Catholic church and ecumenical Protestants were already diminishing foreign support in missionary personnel, and evangelical Christians accepted higher fees for providing visas for expatriate missionary personnel in Bible Schools.

In 1980 the Minister of Religion—who had in 1975 convoked the national council for Muslims (*Majelis 'Ulamā' Indonesia*) and had recognized the national conferences for the other religions—established an interreligious council (*Wadah Musyawarah Antar Umat Beragama*). The council had its first problem in 1981, when the *Majelis 'Ulamā' Indonesia* had issued a *fatwa* prohibiting Muslims to attend Christmas celebrations. This was considered as 'anti-Pancasila' by the Minister of Religion and therefore the president of the Majelis 'Ulamā', Prof. Dr. Haji Abdulmalik ibn Abdulkarim Amrullah, commonly known as Hamka, resigned.²⁶ The government wanted a more lenient policy which was mostly maintained in the following years: President Suharto stipulated that his cabinet ministers and the diplomatic community would be present at Christmas celebrations in the great Jakarta stadium of Senayan, an event that was broadcasted by national television to the whole nation, showing how a Muslim lit the first candle in a giant Christmas tree.²⁷ Haji Muhammad Suharto, for a long period regarded by most Indonesian and foreign observers as an adherent of mystical teachings rather than a staunch Muslim, showed himself here first of all the head of the Pancasila State

²⁵ C.H. Koetsier and A. de Kuiper, "Godsdienstvrijheid in Indonesie in het geding," *Wereld en Zending* 8 (1979): 64-76.

²⁶ K. Steenbrink, "Hamka (1908-1981) and the Integration of the Islamic *Ummah* of Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 1 (1994): 119-47.

²⁷ Personal observation watching Indonesian television in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

and representative of the civil religion which includes and protects all universal religions.

In 1979 Minister of Religion Haji Alamsyah Ratu Perwiranegara launched a new program of interreligious harmony on three levels. It should promote the internal harmony within one religion (there were not only conflicts between Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul 'Ulamā' Muslims, but also very frequent conflicts within the Buddhist community), stimulate harmony between religions, and finally harmony between religions and the government.²⁸ Within the research department of the Ministry of Religion a small unit was set up, first under the direction of the liberal scholar of Islamic law Haji Zaini Ahmad Noeh and the administrator Haji Raden Djatiwijono, and since 1990 under Sudjangi. The project continued at least until 1998 and organized a large number of interreligious meetings, very often after local conflicts. Its numerous publications (more than 5000 pages in at least twenty volumes), show a long and impressive series of interreligious meetings under the umbrella of politicians, occasions that had a substantial sociopolitical impact but a rather limited theological one. The series mirrors a government which wants law and order, economic development, and religious leaders cooperating in this model rather than fighting for their own flock and tradition. In their position as government officials, the leaders of the program professed their first loyalty to the civil religion and the other religious traditions were subordinated to that lofty domain.

In order to stimulate the efforts for interreligious harmony, the Department of Comparative Religion at the Yogyakarta State Academy of Islamic Studies, Sunan Kalijaga, founded an Indonesian branch of the *International Association for the History of Religion* in 1990. In 1993 this department took the initiative to convene a national conference, commemorating the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions of Chicago. Prominent members of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity were invited. Dr. Sularso Sopater, General Chairman of the Indonesian Council of Churches, delivered a speech on the future of religious pluralism, while two Hindus from Bali, I Gusti Ngurah Bagus and I Ketut Wiana also spoke about the themes of pluralism and the participation of religions in the national development. Finally the Congress adopted the text of a declaration expressing the same themes. The conference also inaugurated the *National Foundation for the Study of Interreligious Harmony*, which later on started

²⁸ H. Alamsyah Ratuperwiranegara, "Wadah Musyawarah Antar Umat Beragama Dalam Negara Pancasila," *Dialog* 5/9 (1980): 3-5. In the English summary of this Indonesian speech it was stated that the interreligious consultative body "is pragmatic in nature, i.e. to serve people of different religions in accordance with the Broad Outlines of State's Policy and the Guidelines for the Internalization and Application of Pancasila"; *ibid.* 3.

an international journal, published in English, *Religiosa, Indonesian Journal on Religious Harmony*.²⁹

The Minister of Religion for the period 1993-1998, Dr. Haji Tarmizi Taher, found it important to publish a number of his international speeches under the English title *Aspiring for the Middle Path: Religious Harmony in Indonesia*.³⁰ Among the seventeen papers were speeches delivered at PISAI, the Pontifical Institute for Islamic Studies in Rome, Hartford Seminary (1997), Harvard University (1995) and Leiden University (1996), but also in Rabat and Cairo. In these papers Tarmizi Taher defended the different fields of the civil and universal religion, referring to the 1985 law for the social and political organizations:

Many religious organizations expressed their objection and resistance to the draft of this law. The government stated that this law will not result in the suppression of religion by Pancasila. The ideology of Pancasila will not interfere in the theology of religion. Government and religious leaders came to a consensus about ideology and religion, by the formulation that organizations were to be based solely on Pancasila but theology was to be based on the holy books.³¹

The Middle Path promoted by Tarmizi Taher is the moderate harmony between secularism and extreme fanaticism in religion:

Ummatan wasatan (moderate and quality oriented nation) has been the paradigm adopted to establish a new image of Islam and the Muslim world. . . . This trend of searching for a moderate and quality oriented *ummah* has been implemented and developed by Southeast Asian Muslims for decades of their development, in particular in Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia. Although they are dedicated and devout Muslims, the attitude and the culture of Muslims in this region are less Arabicized. . . . Indonesia could become a leader for developing countries in the common success of material and spiritual development.³²

The Indonesian government is not the only body active in the field of interreligious relations. There are several private organizations, commonly referred to as NGO's or non-governmental organizations, that deal with the same issue. The most striking difference between government initia-

²⁹ The first issue was published in August 1995. Until February 1998 three volumes were published with a good mixture of Muslim and Christian contributions. There was one Buddhist and one Hindu-Balinese contribution until now.

³⁰ With an introduction by Dr. Azyumardi Azra published in 1997 by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society, Jakarta.

³¹ H. Tarmizi Taher, *Aspiring for the Middle Path* 10 (address at PISAI, Rome, 27 October 1995).

³² *Ibid.*, 85-86 (address at Harvard University, 8 November 1995).

tives and NGO policies is that the latter combine social activism with interreligious commitment. *The Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial* (LKIS, Foundation for the Study of Islam and Society) started in the early 1990s in Yogyakarta as a debating club of young Nahdlatul 'Ulama' students and scholars. They developed ideas about the civil society as a society in which the government should not be the sole player in the political game so that many different parties could fulfill their democratic role. They stimulated contacts with people who were not Muslims, and devoted several seminars to interreligious relations. In 1993 they started a publishing house that issued, among others, studies about Hasan Hanafi and translations of works by Ali Asghar Engineer and Abdullah an-Na'im. Especially the last mentioned author is very outspoken in his remarks about Muslim attitudes to women and to other religions.

On the initiative of Protestants, *Dialog Antar Iman* (DIAN, Interfaith Dialogue) was founded in 1994. It aims at a dialogue between individuals, not between organizations. Since 1997 DIAN holds monthly interreligious meetings and incidentally interreligious prayer sessions. Participants come together in 'neutral' places such as conference centers, but also in Muslim 'seminaries' (*pesantren*), the Buddhist monastery of Mendut near the Borobudur, and other places. DIAN is also active in the inter-denominational struggle for the defense of human rights. The largest national human rights organizations, the *Lembaga Bantuan Hukum* (Foundation for Legal Aid) and *Forum Keadilan* (Platform for Justice), are interdenominational, and prominent Christian and Muslim leaders are active in both of them. The cooperation for the sake of democracy and justice is here a higher priority than the theological dialogue.

An Unprecedented Persecution of Christians in the 1990s?

In 1996 and 1997 Minister of Religion Tarmizi Taher had to go abroad several times in order to correct the image, especially in the United States, of growing problems for Christians in Indonesia. In an undated paper he said:

The problem of religious upheaval is observable in recent disturbances. The East Timor riots that broke out in November 1995 were associated with Catholicism. In these riots Catholics victimized both Muslims and Protestants and temporarily forced them to leave the province. Catholic mobs burned mosques to the ground and looted Muslim-owned shops. In Situbondo (East Java), Tasikmalaya and Rengasdengklok (both in West Java), Muslims went on a rampage, burning churches and shops owned by mostly ethnically Chinese (non-Muslims).

We must be cautious, however, before jumping to the conclusion that the riots are directly related to religious causes. As suggested by many erudite and keen observers, the roots of these riots

lay not in religious problems. Sociologically, for instance, Indonesian society now is undergoing rapid social changes brought about by national development. The pace of social change is coupled with the globalization process that has also invaded Indonesia during the last decade. Consequently, certain segments of society are experiencing disorientation, dislocation and alienation, all of which is very conducive to social unrest.³³

A few words about the background of these events are needed. As a result of the collapse of the Portuguese colonial empire, East Timor was left by the last civil officials and army officers in 1975. A civil war broke out, during which the Indonesian army invaded the capital and occupied the former Portuguese territory. Until now this occupation received neither broad international recognition nor the approval of the entire population. The consequences of the arrival of the Indonesians proved to be much more serious than expected: out of some 675,000 inhabitants between 10-20% died either by direct army action or by starvation, the latter because the mountainous regions became isolated from the major towns on the coast which were under the direct control of the Indonesian government. Many Timorese fled to Portugal and many more to other parts of Indonesia. In the early 1980s the population was not much more than 400,000. In this period of disaster the Catholic church became the strongest voice for the oppressed people. In 1975 it was estimated that about one third of the population were Catholics and that two thirds adhered to tribal religions, but in 1990 virtually all original East Timorese had become fervent Catholics, with their faith as the central symbol of opposition to the annexation as the 27th province of Indonesia, formally declared in July 1976. With the annexation—or: integration, as it was officially labeled—a large number of Javanese teachers and officials and Macassarese and Buginese traders also brought Islam to the area. Shops and government offices were besides army centers and mosques the most important targets of riots and guerrilla attacks. During riots in September 1995 some seventeen mosques and Muslim places for common prayer were destroyed. Ninety-six suspects were put in jail but soon afterwards released because of lack of proof. The *Majelis Ulama' Indonesia* sent Rp. 176 million from Jakarta for the restoration of the houses of prayer, but the local government prevented the restoration with administrative regulations (no solid proof of ownership of the ground, no permits for religious buildings, and so on).³⁴

In December 1996 Bishop Ximenes Belo received the Nobel Peace Award for his courageous efforts to defend the rights of the East Timorese

³³ *Ibid.*, 44

people, together with the political activist Ramos Horta. In a reaction to Belo's comments about the Catholic character of the East-Timorese people, now threatened by the large number of Muslims from other parts of Indonesia who arrived in this new province, Muhammadiyah Chairman Dr. Amien Rais (about whom more below) said that Bishop Belo should send all Javanese and Buginese Muslims back, but should be prepared to receive the Javanese Christians in his island, in order to make Java again a Muslim island. This last statement shows the reinforcement of a single religious identity as an ideal in this period of uncertainties and anxieties.

Of all the cases of riots and interreligious conflicts in the 1990s we would like to take one that has received little international attention until now. This is the epidemic of anxiety about violation of the Eucharistic host in Indonesia. For the period 1990-1995, thirty two cases are documented. Most often Protestants were involved, but in some instances Muslims were accused of attempts to violate the host from a Catholic church. Several cases ended in the killing of the suspect. There were court sentences of prison terms of one to five years. Nationally the best known instance is from the Church of Renha Rosario in Larantuka, Flores, and concerns an attempt at violation on 11 June 1995 by a Protestant who, according to rumors, also had a Muslim identity card. The aftermath of this incident was that the small shopping center, where all shops were owned by Muslim traders, was set afire. From the description of the cases we have the impression that the 'committees of the delict' were just people who, because of genuine interest or curiosity, attended a Catholic service and then, perhaps since they did not want to disturb the order, joined the congregation in receiving communion. Consequences in several cases were very serious and the general atmosphere between Catholics and Muslims deteriorated, also through the spread of anti-Muslim pamphlets in Flores.³⁵

The cases mentioned above reflect growing tensions between Christians and Muslims during the 1990s, and most often Muslims were the victims. There were, however, also series of severe incidents in which Christians were the victims. On Sunday morning, 9 June 1996, between 8:00 and 11.45 a.m., a crowd of some 1500 people attacked and seriously damaged ten churches in Surabaya. These churches were mostly small buildings of evangelical congregations, but also two greater churches of

³⁴ *Forum Keadilan*, 4 November 1996,96.

³⁵ Sudjangi, *Profil Kerukunan* 2 : 137, and interviews in Larantuka, July 1997. On the process of easy acceptance of the Eucharistic host by Muslims I could refer to the burial of my mother in law, in a small church in The Netherlands, 27 December 1991, where among others some twenty Indonesian Muslims, friends of my family, were present. When the priest distributed the communion, he offered the host also to these Muslims, who accepted and ate it. Some years earlier, in 1983, a Muslim friend who had joined me and my children to a church and visited my wife later on the same day in a hospital, gave my wife the host which he had accepted that morning in the church, apparently with the purpose of passing it to her later that day during his visit to the hospital. On the other hand, Catholics and some Protestants on Java will easily

mainstream denominations suffered major damage. Some churches were set afire and totally destroyed.³⁶

The first case mentioned by Minister of Religion Tarmizi Taher in one of the speeches cited above, was on black Thursday, 10 October 1996, when in the East Javanese town of Situbondo the Court of Justice, a number of Protestant and Catholic schools, and twenty three churches (in Situbondo itself and in neighboring places) suffered serious damage or were even totally ruined. In one of the churches the minister, his wife and three children died. The antecedent of the Situbondo riots was extremely strange. A man named Saleh, a simple-minded Muslim, according to some reports a lunatic, had stated that "God was a creature, *makhluk*, that the Prophet Muḥammad was not God's messenger and the Qur'ān was conceived by man."³⁷ This Saleh was a student at a 'minor' *pesantren*, one of the Muslim boarding schools in the area (this region is known as the "Athos of Indonesia" because of its many and very large Muslim boarding schools). Saleh was brought to court and was sentenced to a prison term of five years. Several Muslim factions, apart from Nahdlatul 'Ulamā', were critical about this verdict and demanded the death penalty. A group of young men of Madurese descent, who had migrated to East-Timor and fled after the 1995 anti-Muslim riots to settle in the East-Javanese town of Malang, were brought in trucks to Situbondo as *agents provocateurs*. They were the ones who attacked the Court building, Chinese shops and Christian churches in Situbondo and in surrounding places, some as far as forty kilometer away. Only after about five hours the army intervened.

Immediately after this tragic event different theories about the real causes began to circulate. Some people pointed to the growing political tension preceding 'Suharto's End-Game.' The old general, born in 1929, would be elected again in the 1997 general elections, to become confirmed by the new parliament in March 1998. Suharto's beloved wife had died in April 1996, and since then the aging President looked as someone who was no longer in power. Therefore, army generals and others who played the political game were looking for ways to strengthen their position. A general situation of insecurity could give more power to these persons. Moreover, East Java, known as a very strong Muslim area, the cradle of

accept an invitation for participation in a *slametan* given by Muslims in their homes at important events such as birth, marriage, harvest, and burials. This religious meal is, notwithstanding Islamic prayers in Arabic, considered part of the *adat* religion, rather than strict Islam. On this subject see also the theological proposal by Theo Sundermeier, *Konvivenz und Differenz: Studien zu einer Verständenden Missionswissenschaft* (Erlangen Luth. Mission, 1995), 102-12: "Dürfen Nichtchristen zum Abendmahl zugelassen werden?"

³⁶ A full documentation with color pictures of this and other events from 1996 in Paul Tahalele & Thomas Santoso, *Hygimkah*.

³⁷ *Forum Keadilan*, 4 November 1996, 97.

the traditionalist movement of the Nahdlatul 'Ulamā', could only be controlled when the Muslim leaders could be controlled. Blaming them for disorder would be a strategically very important step towards stricter control. Nahdlatul 'Ulamā' leader Abdurrahman Wahid later accused some opponents (sectarian Muslim leaders, in cooperation with some members of the military who provided the trucks to bring hired youngsters to the place of the riots) that "they had received some US \$100,000 and used it to buy shares in the Jakarta Stock Exchanges."³⁸ Other commentators focused on the growing gap between rich and poor in Indonesia, especially in East Java, one of the poorest provinces of the country, where in all major towns trade and commerce were dominated by a Chinese minority who could become rich, thanks to a coalition with Javanese/Indonesian corrupt government officials. Some other observers drew attention to the growing influence of a-political evangelicalism among Protestants in Indonesia, a trend in which highly individualistic ethics, especially but not exclusively amongst first generation Chinese converts, showed a combination of individual piety and social shrewdness.

Ten weeks later, 26 December 1996, very serious riots took place in Tasikmalaya, Western Java, in many aspects resembling the Situbondo events. Also in this case a (nominal) Muslim was insulting Islam. A son of a policeman, a lazy and naughty teenager, was sent by his father to a pesantren. Because of his bad behavior, he was reprimanded by its leader. In a meeting with this leader, the father insulted him while defending his son. The other students attacked the police station and also destroyed some churches. Like at the other pogrom-style attacks, within 30 minutes hired youngsters from distant places could freely terrorize Christian buildings and shops owned by Chinese because the police did not come into action till several hours later. In 1997 this series of events continued, especially during the May 1997 elections in Banjarmasin and Dili (the capital of East Timor), from 15-19 September 1997 in Ujung Pandang and in January 1998 again on several places in Western Java.

Surveying the attacks on churches, some Christians have come to the following conclusions:³⁹

Period	Attacks	average per year
1945-1955	0	0
1955-1965	2	0.2
1965-1974	46	4.6
1975-1984	89	8.9
1985-1994	132	13.2
1995-1997	105	52.5

³⁸ In the newspapers *Jawa Pos* and *Sura*, 11 June 1997, quoted in Tahalele, *Bejmikah*, 8

³⁹ Statistics taken from *Bejmikah*, passim

That many Christians see this as an extremely serious situation is understandable. In the joint declaration of 27 March 1997 from which we quoted at the beginning of this article, the churches declared their willingness to follow the example of Jesus who had to experience many humiliations and even the trial of the cross, and they asked the government to guarantee a true freedom of religion and to take measures against those who violated this principle.

That these attacks happened in Indonesia has come as a surprise to many outsiders. Wilfred Cantwell Smith wrote in the 1950s: "Nowhere in the Muslim world (except perhaps in Indonesia?) do Muslims feel that a non-Muslim member of their nation is 'one of us'. And nowhere do the minorities feel accepted."⁴⁰ The nearly 10 percent Christian minority of Indonesia has two strong sides. Many areas in the outer islands were and are predominantly Christian and, if only for the sake of national unity, Christianity can not be ignored. Moreover, in intellectual and liberal Muslim circles, Christians were renowned for their good hospitals and schools and for their many contributions to Indonesian culture. Until the 1980s the Muslims could be characterized as "a majority with an inferiority complex."⁴¹ Since then the situation has changed drastically. Christians became more and more dominated by evangelicals, who refrained from active participation in society, politics and cultural affairs. On the other side, Muslims acquired a new confidence. The prominent theologian Eka Darmaputera stated at the Ekumindo meeting between Indonesian Protestant Churches and European partners:

The socioeconomic status of Indonesia changed radically, from one of the 'poorest' countries in the world 30 years ago to become a 'middle income' country with a prospect of becoming one of the 'new industrial countries' in the near future. The largest social force in the country, namely Islam, has also undergone a radical transformation, from being marginal, low educated, and traditional, into a never to be under-estimated political power and social force, modern and intellectual, the most dominant sociopolitical force besides the military. . . . What has happened within the life of the churches in Indonesia? My answer is, with deep sadness, NONE.⁴²

What lies behind the last two sentences of this statement is the fact that the Christian churches which had an important place and function in parts of the society during the colonial period and in the first decades after independence, saw in later years their role in the fields of education,

⁴⁰ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (New York: Mentor, 1959), 86.

⁴¹ This is the title of Chapter XI in W. F. Wertheim, *Indonesie van Vorstentum tot Neo-Kolonie* (Meppel: Boom, 1978).

⁴² From an unpublished paper by Dr. Eka Darmaputera "Churches in Indonesia: The Strategy for the Future," (Spring 1997).

politics and health care greatly diminished and could not find new avenues of action outside the domains of 'religion' in the limited sense of the word. The meeting point between Christians and Muslims had never been in the field of doctrine and rituals. Christians certainly tried to keep in touch with the national and local cultures, but by and large they stayed away from an in-depth dialogue with Islam; there was hardly any apologetic and no attempt at a self-definition from within a serious meeting with Islam. Many examples of significant studies of local languages and cultures by foreign and national Christians are available, but very little attention has been paid to mainstream Islam.⁴³

***A Prophetic Catholic Analysis: Y.B. Mangunwijaya*⁴⁴**

Father Yusuf Bilyarta Mangunwijaya (b. 1929) does not have a regular position within the structure of the Catholic church of Indonesia. He is not primarily a parish priest, a teacher or an ecclesiastical bureaucrat. Since long active as a writer of essays and novels, and directing an experimental educational institute for small children, he lives at times in slum areas and otherwise in a private house in a lower middle class neighborhood. Notwithstanding his irregular ministry, he is yet a clear representative of his church. Different from the Protestant theologian and novel writer Marianne Katoppo, who only plays a marginal role in the Protestant churches of Indonesia,⁴⁵ Mangunwijaya has continued to stay close to progressive and central circles in his church.

For the annual meeting of the Catholic bishops in November 1996, Mangunwijaya was invited to hold the keynote speech, which he entitled: *Gereja Diaspora, Gereja Berkualitas* ([Only] A Diaspora Church can be a Quality Church). In his opinion there is 'too much of religion' in Indonesia in general and within the Roman Catholic Church in particular: too many committees and organizations, such as the charismatic movement and Legio Mariae, too many choirs, days of remembrance, picnics, hiking events and other activities organized by parishes. In his opinion, the Indonesian church is overactive and organizes so much that it is in danger of becoming a sect, concentrating religious life on the parish and its organizations. He extolled the Jewish sabbath-ceremonies in the family and

⁴³ For examples see Karel Steenbrink, *Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam. Contacts and Conflicts 1596-1950* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 146-47. Alle Hoekema, "Indonesische Christenen over de Islam," *Kerk en Theologie* 49 (1998): 5-24 states that it is a matter "of great concern, that there are very few specialists on Islam amongst Indonesian Christians."

⁴⁴ This section is based on Karel A. Steenbrink, "Y. B. Mangunwijaya's Blueprint for a Diaspora-Church in Indonesia," *Exchange* 27 (1998), 16-33.

⁴⁵ Karel Steenbrink, "Ecumenical Adventures of Marianne Katoppo," in L. Lagerwerf a.o., eds., *Changing Partnership of Missionary and Ecumenical Movements* (Utrecht: IIMO, 1995), 212-25.

noted that the busy activities in the parish threatened not only the family as the nucleus for religious education and practice, but also the spread of personal faith in everyday life in the society.

As discussed above, some two hundred churches, convents and Christian schools were burned down in 1995 and 1996, and different interpretations were given regarding the background and real causes of these riots. Amidst this unrest, Mangunwijaya remarked rather cynically: "When our churches are set on fire, we Catholics say: do not be afraid, we will build them again and in a more sumptuous style. . . . But the essence of our faith is not in magnificent buildings or in prestigious institutions." He contrasted two patrons of the Catholic mission. Saint Francis Xavier is the model for the earlier centuries of mission, when missionaries went hand in hand with the military and the merchants. And twentieth century mission has as its patron Saint Theresia of Lisieux, a modest young lady. "Therefore we should not try to become big as an institution, not lobby for more Catholic ministers in the government or pray that 'Gus Dur' [the common name for the well-known Muslim leader Abdurrahman Wahid, mentioned above] would receive baptism. True Christian faith is best expressed in a minority and diaspora situation."⁴⁶

There were a number of critical reactions to this 'diaspora-gospel' of Mangunwijaya. Some said that he blamed the victims of the church fires rather than the fanatics, bandits and criminals who caused the inferno of these buildings. Also, in the Indonesian situation small groups and dispersed Catholic congregations should not be encouraged as is often done with regard to the Catholics in communist China who really live in an unwanted situation. Besides, especially in the big cities of Java, such as Jakarta, Bandung and Surabaya, the Catholics and the Christians in general live already dispersed amongst an overwhelming majority of Muslims.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, Mangunwijaya was asked to design the *Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops for Easter 1997*, together with the Jesuit Franz Magnis Suseno and some lay intellectuals. This letter, mentioned already in the introduction of this article, pointed to moral depravation in the manipulation of political parties, the ban on trade unions and the increasing corruption. These crimes ultimately led to the attacks on shops, economic, cultural and religious buildings, and created a situation in which religious leaders could no longer control their communities.

The publication of this pastoral letter, signed by Cardinal Justinus Darmaatmadja, was certainly not an official approval of the idea of a diaspora church, but it provided support for Mangunwijaya's ideas. In a series of seven articles in the Catholic weekly *Hidup Katolik*, in March-April

⁴⁶ *Hidup Katolik*, 24 November 1996

1997, these ideas were elaborated and became the subject of a widespread debate. Writing about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Mangunwijaya stressed even more than in his novels that the Portuguese and the Spanish of this period "were champions of fanaticism and cruelty, compared with the Protestants and Muslims and certainly when considered besides the Hindus and Buddhists."⁴⁷ Discussing the structure of the parish, he sketched the system of the Dutch missionaries in Indonesia since the nineteenth century as an effort to imitate the situation in their home country, where some Catholic areas segregated themselves from a liberal and Protestant majority. Also in Indonesia, he claimed, the strategy of the Catholic Church had been concentrated too much on the creation of a separate community, with its own schools, political party, newspapers and hospitals. The inner heart of the church still was considered to be the clergy, the religious women and men, and the lay people were mostly seen as 'consumers' only. Life in a modern metropolitan city is a nomadic life, he stressed: people migrate for work, for living, for recreation. In this hectic world the basic unit for living is the family. The church should try to heighten the quality of the family rather than its own institutions. A missionary church should only maintain institutions that are truly conducive to its main purpose: the coming of the Kingdom of God. To serve this goal, a diaspora church should become a flexible and accommodating church.

The Militant Apologetic of Media Dakwah

In the previous sections we discussed the developments of the 1990s from the perspectives of Christians. Now we turn to the perspectives of several Muslim groups on these same developments. We start with the 'hard-liners,' those who in a militant way fight against what they consider efforts for the Christianization of Indonesia, and then move to a brief discussion of some other groups, arranged in the order of a growing degree of understanding and irenic attitude.

Media Dakwah is the monthly periodical of the Jakarta-based national private organization *Deewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia*. It is a reformist organization that continues the line of prominent Muslim leaders and politicians such as the late Muhammad Natsir (1908-1993), who as a leader of the Masyumi party in the 1950s propagated the transformation of Indonesia from a Pancasila State into an Islamic State. For this group the Pancasila is a pseudo-religion and they plead for an exclusive loyalty to Islam, against the complex religious identities discussed above. When in 1985 the Pancasila had to be accepted as *azas tunggal*, the sole basis for all

⁴⁷ *Hidup Katolik*, 23 March 1997, 30

political and social organizations, including the religious ones, Muhammad Natsir published a booklet "The Foundation of our Religious Convictions."⁴⁸ He analyzed a number of Pancasila books in use at primary and secondary schools, and denounced phrases such as "all religions honor the *Tuhan Yang Maha Esa* [the One and High Deity]." He also criticized lessons about funerals which suggest: "When you see that someone is carried to the cemetery, be it someone of your own or of another religion, pray for this soul to your God!" Much earlier he had already rejected *shafā'a*, intercession on behalf of the dead, performed by prayer or by the calling of the Muslim creed in the ears of someone who has just died (*talqin*).⁴⁹

Together with the fight for a stricter application of the rules of Islam, the circle around Media Dakwah and the DDII "are obsessed with the idea that Islam, as they understand it, is under siege."⁵⁰ They often report about alleged aggressive Christianization campaigns in Indonesia and circulate stories about marriages, opening of schools, distribution of bibles and medicine, all with the sole purpose of conversion. There was even a report about a physician who tried to convert the famous Muhammad Natsir when he was at the very hour of death in the Cipto Mangunkusumo Hospital of Jakarta. "A paramedic, who reported the physician's behavior to the Natsir family, declared that such actions were often undertaken by some Christian physicians in the case of Muslim patients."⁵¹

Traditional and modern apologetic in Muhammadiyah: Amien Rais

With some 20,000-30,000 subscriptions, *Media Dakwah* is certainly not unimportant, but it is small compared to the Muhammadiyah, with three million active members the largest reformist organization of the country (see above, p. 6). It was founded partly in reaction to the expansion of Christian mission. Among its members we find many practical and modern Muslims, who are convinced that the organization's extensive educational and medical activities form the most efficient NGO for the urgent needs of the large cities where most Muhammadiyah members are found.

⁴⁸ Muhammad Natsir, *Azas Keyakinan Agama Kita* (Jakarta: Fajar Shadiq, 1985).

⁴⁹ On this see Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973), 87.

⁵⁰ R. William Liddle, "Media Dakwah Scripturalism: One Form of Islamic Political Thought and Action in New Order Indonesia," in Mark R. Woodward, ed., *Toward a new Paradigm: Recent Developments in Indonesian Islamic Thought* (Tempe: Arizona State University, Program for Southeast Asian Studies, 1996), 323-56.

⁵¹ *Media Dakwah*, March 1993, as quoted in Darul Aqsha et al., eds., *Islam in Indonesia: A Survey of Events and Developments from 1988 to March 1993* (Jakarta: INIS, 1995), 482. The latter work is a reprint of the regular chronicle published in *INIS Newsletter*. INIS stands for *Indonesian Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies*, a cooperative program of Leiden University and Indonesian State Islamic Institutes. In this program groups of six to ten MA students are annually enrolled at Leiden University.

There has always been an apologetic stream within Muhammadiyah, because of its origins in the heartland of the old Muslim Sultanate of Mataram (now Yogyakarta), where the Catholic and Protestant mission became active in the early twentieth century.

Muhammadiyah was amongst the first of the new style Muslim organizations that suggested that it was not enough to be a 'nominal' Muslim. It emphasized the importance of a personal choice, and through its already mentioned slogan "back to the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth," it wanted to stress the 'single-mindedness' of the Muslim commitment and to exterminate "remnants of animism and Hinduism".⁵² Since its origins, however, there was also a more accommodating, modernizing stream within Muhammadiyah. The schools of the organization were mostly not modeled after the traditional Qur'ān school or the more advanced *pesantren*, the religious school that limited its curriculum to religious and Arabic texts, but followed the colonial school system and later the curriculum of the Ministry of Education of the Indonesian Republic.

As to doctrinal apologetic, Muhammadiyah revived the polemic style of the Muslim tradition. Djarnawi Hadikusumo, general secretary in the 1960s and 1970s, wrote two well-known books about Christianity.⁵³ However, the most popular book on that subject was the Indonesian translation of the writings of the Egyptian Muhammad Abu Zahra.⁵⁴ There is a large amount of Christian literature available in Indonesian, but Muslims prefer writings on Christianity by Muslims, just as Christians tend to make use of the writings of Hendrik Kraemer, Kenneth Cragg and Geoffrey Parrinder rather than of books on Islam written by Indonesian Muslims.⁵⁵ This restricted intellectual communication underlines the general stress on the status quo, the absence of a significant intellectual exchange, and the opposition to proselytism on the Muslim side.

This last aspect became also manifest in the action undertaken by Muhammadiyah Muslims in 1975 to prevent a general assembly of the World Council of Churches planned for Jakarta. After a long debate, Nairobi was chosen for this gathering. At the occasion of the visit of John Paul II to Indonesia, 9-14 October 1989, the General Chairman of the

⁵² For the history and ideology of Muhammadiyah one can consult, in addition to the titles mentioned in note 10 above: James Peacock, *Muslim Puritans: Reformist Psychology in Southeast Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

⁵³ Djarnawi Hadikusumo, *Sekitar Kristologi* and *Sekitar Perdjandjhan Lama Perdjandjhan Baru*, both published in Yogyakarta, ca 1965, with several reprints.

⁵⁴ Muhammad Abu Zahra, *Tinjdjuan tentang agama Maschi* (Sala Ab. Sitti Sjamsijah, 1969, reprint of the 1963 edition, many later reprints). Translation of *Al-Ḥadara li an-Nuṣraṇiyah*.

⁵⁵ Personal experience as lecturer at the State Academy of Islamic Studies of Jakarta and Yogyakarta between 1981-1988 and contacts with Catholic and Protestant students and lecturers in that period.

Muhammadiyah, A.R. Fachruddin, published a booklet to welcome the Pope. It was written in the very polite and literary style that is characteristic for the Javanese court, formerly used only to address high officials and kings. The booklet gave basic information about Islam in Indonesia, its history and fundamental beliefs. The obvious purpose was to correct the widespread idea that Indonesian Muslims are syncretistic in their faith and only nominally Muslim. Fachruddin did not oppose the visit of the Pope, neither did he object to efforts of 'Christianization' by "our Christian brothers, as long as they carry out this duty in a spirit of chivalry, without playing with poor people and people who are in a weak and critical position, by promising food, money for the repair of their house, a guarantee for admittance to a school, a job etc." A joint publication by Jakarta Muslims at this occasion also criticized "the abuse of diakonia or humanitarian help and the lack of tolerance of Christians towards Islam. In Chambésy, June 1976, leaders of the Protestant and Catholic churches gathered with a number of Muslims in an open way. This Conference anathematized . . . all methods of abuse of diakonia for the sake of propaganda. During that Conference they agreed to send a message to all Christian churches and organizations about this problem."⁵⁶

A good example of the combination of the Muhammadiyah mixture of modernization and stress on a strict Muslim identity is the work of the person who is since 1994 General Chairman of Muhammadiyah, Dr. Amien Rais, whose sharp reaction to Bishop Belo's remark about East Timor we quoted earlier. Born in 1944, Rais went to America after an Indonesian B.A. in political science. In 1974 he received a M.A. at Notre Dame University, where he also made special studies of the communist world of Eastern Europe. He continued his studies at Chicago University, where he obtained a Ph.D. in 1981, with a dissertation on the Muslim Brothers of Egypt.⁵⁷ One of the first Indonesian publications after his return from America was a vehement attack on orientalism, in the style of Edward Said:

The book on the history of Islam by Von Grunebaum was once selected as a textbook at Teheran University. In our own country the *Cambridge History of Islam* is used in many universities as a reference book for Islam. We were too long colonized, which caused us to suffer from an inferiority complex. We accept all statements by West-

⁵⁶ *Suara Muhammadiyah* no 21 (1989) 5-7 and *Pani Masyarakat* no 627 (October 1989) 34. About the Chambésy Conference, where from Indonesia Dr. Muhammad Rasjidi and the Protestant Prof. Ithomi were present, see *International Review of Mission* no 260 (October 1976).

⁵⁷ M. Amien Rais, "Belajar ke Barat, tapi anti Orientalis," [Study in the West, but an enemy of orientalism] *Ummul Qur'an* 5/3 (1994) 98-107.

ern scholars and orientalists about Islam, because we suppose that they are very clever. In fact, according to my own experience, too many orientalists are not really qualified for the study of Islam. They have no intimate knowledge of the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet and their Arabic is very weak. There are hundreds of orientalists like this in America and they are the majority.⁵⁸

Rais does not write direct anti-Christian polemics but fosters a self-consciousness among Muslims. In 1995 Rais also showed his independence in the political field by suggesting that a public debate should be held about the succession of President Suharto. This act was considered as an open confrontation with the political power, and as a result he was dismissed from the rather ceremonial post as chairman of the Scholarly Advisory Board of ICMI, about which later. In 1997 he publicly announced that he was available for the post of president. Since the three political parties all supported Suharto in the election of March 1998, Rais' statement was more a political fact in itself than a serious declaration of candidacy in the presidential election.

Pro-Western, Modern, Indonesian and Muslim: ICMI and the Tolerant Theology of Nurcholis Madjid

With a great national conference in Malang, 6-8 December 1990, the *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*, ICMI, the "All-Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals" was established.⁵⁹ With Suharto's favorite Dr. Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, at that time Minister of Technology, as its godfather, and from 1993-1998 with President Suharto himself as its patron, ICMI stands for the more overtly Islamic character of the New Order regime in its final period. ICMI should become a think tank for the Muslims, like the *Centre for Strategic and International Studies* had been for the secularists, Catholics and Chinese.⁶⁰ The Muslim ambience of ICMI is slightly different from that of Muhammadiyah. While Muhammadiyah has many members who sympathize with Arab countries, Palestine in the first place, there is in the ICMI a more or less open contempt for the Middle East, considered to be feudal, backward and traditional. Many ICMI leaders have studied in and travel frequently to Western countries. The asso-

⁵⁸ M. Amien Rais, *Orientalisme dan Humanisme Sekular*, Yogyakarta. Shalahuddin Press, 1983:20

⁵⁹ The forthcoming book by V.S. Naipaul, *Beyond Belief*, gives in its opening chapter ample attention to ICMI, but credits the informant Dr. Imaduddin A. Rahim with a too important role. I could only see the Dutch translation which was published before the English 'original'. V.S. Naipaul, *Aleer dan Gelool* (Amsterdam: Atlas, 1997)

⁶⁰ This center is modeled after the CSIS of the Jesuit-led Georgetown University of Washington where, among other Indonesians, Munawir Sjadzali, Minister of Religion from 1983-1993, received his M.A. degree.

ciation is not dominated by religious scholars but by social scientists and specialists in engineering and economy. A large number of its members are the new rich of the (until mid-1997) fast growing "Asian tiger."

There were no specific religious issues at the start of ICMI. Nahdlatul 'Ulamā's number one person, Abdurrahman Wahid, did not become a member of ICMI, but accepted at about the same time a leading position in a human rights' association, *Forum Demokrasi*, where also some prominent Christians and religiously less outspoken Muslims such as the daughter of the first president, Megawati Sukarnoputeri, play an important role. There were several prominent Muslims who did not join ICMI, while some who did so, left again because they found the organization too close to the political establishment (among this group are the activist and lawyer Aswab Mahasin and the mystical poet Emha Ainun Najib). Of those who joined we still mention the vice-president of the consultative board of Nahdlatul 'Ulamā, Kiyahi Haji Ali Yafie, as well as (for some time) Muhammadiyah's Dr. Amien Rais.

Another point of difference with Muhammadiyah is that ICMI harbors no anti-orientalist sentiments. The bimonthly *Ulumul Qur'ān*, led by ICMI leader and economist Prof. Dawam Rahardjo, published many articles by orientalist like Bernard Lewis (labeled a 'Zionist' by Amien Rais). The Jesuit priest Dr. Franz Magnis Suseno was invited several times to contribute to the journal. On 26-27 November 1997, after the riots in Surabaya, Situbondo and Tasikmalaya, ICMI organized a great conference "Religious Plurality and Nationalism in Indonesia." About 75% of the budget of US \$45,000 was donated by ICMI. The conference was held in the Protestant Mission House, the *Hendrik Kraemer Huis* in Oegstgeest, The Netherlands, and opened by, among others, the Indonesian ambassador to Germany at the time, the younger brother of ICMI Chairman, Minister B.J. Habibie. A location in the Netherlands was chosen for the conference so as to create a climate in which prominent Muslim and Christian Indonesians could freely and openly speak with each other and discuss in a quiet atmosphere the many problems that impact interreligious relations in their homeland.

Nurcholis Madjid is probably the most prominent scholar amongst those who provide the ideas for the ICMI. After a brilliant career in the student movement and a Ph.D. under Prof. Fazlur Rahman in Chicago (1984), he set the tone for his later work in Indonesia with the title of a book in 1987 *Islam as a Modern and Indonesian Faith*.⁶¹ Although Madjid refers fre-

⁶¹ Nurcholis Madjid, *Islam Kemoderenan dan Kemendonekaan* (Bandung Mizan, 1987). On what follows see also Greg Barton, "Indonesia's Nurcholis Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid as Intellectual 'Ulamā,'" in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8 (1997): 323-50; Karel Steenbrink, "Nurcholis Madjid and Inclusive Faith in Indonesia," in Gê Speelman, ed., *Muslims and Christians in Europe. Essays in Honour of Jan Slomp* (Kampen Kok 1993), 28-43.

quently to the Qur'ān, he does not follow the Muhammadiyah line of going back to the 'original' message of Islam. The two key words of his thinking are secularization and contextualization. The very controversial word secularization was used by him in the early 1970s (following Harvey Cox' *The Secular City* and the positive interpretation of this term by Friedrich Gogarten) to indicate the necessity to make the message of the Qur'ān concrete and relevant under new conditions, in every society. Secularization, according to Madjid, means bringing up-to-date the ethical doctrines of Islam. Modern Muslims should study the Qur'ān and formulate the basic values found therein. These should be the basis for the application of these values to a modern Islamic society. In the late 1980s the less controversial word of contextualization was used to indicate the permanent task of finding new formulations for the ethical call of Islam.

From a wide reading of Western and Christian books, Madjid made many openings towards Christian theologians, such as the following comment on S. 3:64:

Sura 3:64 reads: *Say, People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but God and that we associate not aught with Him.* The Qur'ān asks us, that is the followers of the scriptural religions, not the adherents of natural religions like animism or paganism, to abandon all practices of creating our own gods, in the sense that we have to free ourselves from objects that are binding and suffocating us spiritually. This is in line and identical with the meaning of the first line of our confession: *I witness, that there is no god*, this means, 'I declare myself free from the limitations of false beliefs, that bind and suffocate my spirit'. Then, in order to complete this process of liberation, this statement has to be continued with: *except Allah* (al-Ilah, i.e. the true God) who is understood according to the doctrine of the One and Only God, *tawhid uluhijya* or strict monotheism. This is the true theology of liberation, if we . . . are allowed to use a terminology that has become popular amongst Catholic religious activists in Latin America. There is no true liberation for a human individual before s/he really understands and truly practices these words in her or his life.⁶²

Madjid was not always so lucky in his dialogue with Christians. During a conference at the Universitas Indonesia in Jakarta, 5-6 April 1995, he touched upon the possibility of a marriage of Jesus, quoting two books by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* and *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*.⁶³ The prominent Jesuit Prof.

⁶² Nurcholis Madjid, "Beberapa Renungan tentang Kehidupan Keagamaan untuk Generasi Mendatang," *Ulumul Qur'an* 4/1 (1993): 4-25, quotation from 12.

⁶³ Both London: Transworld Publishers, 1992. Also available in earlier editions

Frans Magnis Suseno protested against this speech with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Religion. Madjid said in his defense that he had bought popular books written by respected scholars in Western countries and wanted to start a debate in an academic setting, the Universitas Indonesia. The debate between the two scholars quickly spread by means of photocopies, and this publicity certainly did not improve the quality of the debate on theological themes, a debate wherein Christians like to refrain from scrutinizing Muslim sources and serious Muslims have a great problem finding their way in the jungle of contemporary Christianity.⁶⁴

The Liberating Traditionalism of the Nahdlatul 'Ulamā'; the Case of Abdurrahman Wahid

A frequently debated issue regarding Islam in Indonesia is the question: Which organization is the larger one, Muhammadiyah or Nahdlatul 'Ulamā'? A claim of 30 or even 35 million members and sympathizers for the Nahdlatul 'Ulamā' is not unusual,⁶⁵ while Muhammadiyah asserted to have about the same number of sympathizers. The great difference between the two organizations is that only religious scholars or '*Ulamā*' can be full members of the Nahdlatul 'Ulamā', while Muhammadiyah has many more members who are not religious 'specialists.'

Although the proper meaning of *Nahdlatul 'Ulamā'* (NU) is the "Awakening of the Scholars," the NU is no reformist movement. It was founded in 1926 in rivalry with Muhammadiyah and some other reformist movements who were recognized nationally and internationally (at the Caliphate Congresses in Mecca and Cairo). NU did not have the pessimistic outlook about the quality of Islam in Indonesia and elsewhere that was a fundamental point for the reformists and it did not share the idea of a period of stagnation, *jummūd*, roughly between 1258 (the fall of the caliphate of Baghdad) and the beginning of the twentieth century. They accepted the general practices of Muslim mysticism, which were often rejected by Muhammadiyah reformists as syncretistic. They also had less of a problem with modernity and even with the growing presence of Christians in Indonesia. A main reason for the latter is that NU is stronger in the countryside, while especially on Java conversion to Christianity has been more a phenomenon of the urban areas (and some remote mountainous regions).

⁶⁴ I received the exchange of letters in May 1995 from Muslim friends both in Bandung and Yogyakarta. Reflections on this debate in Nurcholis Madjid, *Perjalanan Religius 'Umrāh dan Haji* (Jakarta, Paramadina, 1997), a book which was soon after publication withdrawn from the book shops. See also Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, "Pola-pola persepsi Belanda terhadap Islam di Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 3 (1996): 187-212.

⁶⁵ The number of 35 million in Greg Barton, "Indonesia's Nurcholis Madjid," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8 (1997): 323.

As we noted above, Abdurrahman Wahid, the general chairman of NU since 1984,⁶⁶ did not opt for a position within ICMI but became active in *Forum Demokrasi*. In the 1990s he was elected as one of the presidents of the interreligious World Conference on Religion and Peace. During the aftermath of the Situbondo riots and the attacks on churches in 1996, he ordered his youth organization, *Anshor*, to work together with Christian youth organizations to secure the safety of religious buildings. On several occasions Wahid has shown a positive interest in the Latin American theology of liberation, sought contacts with the few Indonesian propagators of this theology, and organized conferences where also Christians were present. As a comment on one of the seminars organized by members and young sympathizers of the Nahdlatul 'Ulamā', it was stated:

When we hear the word 'theology of development', we immediately will associate it with the theology of liberation of Gustavo Gutiérrez, who from the beginning wanted to identify his theology as theology of development. After he realized that this was too tame for the repressive conditions of Latin America, he used the word theology of liberation, a terminology which is more outspoken as a movement against repression. But for countries in Asia and Africa it is much better to use the vocabulary of theology of development. This word not only displays an atmosphere of peace, but it is also in harmony with the national efforts for development. In fact, we do not need to debate this terminology at length, because every religion has a message of liberation and transformation for its adherents.⁶⁷

This quotation shows how much a number of modern and revolutionary Muslims feel at home with some of the terminologies and strategies of a Christian theology of liberation.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ The best overall picture of NU is Greg Barton & Greg Fealy, eds., *Nahdlatul 'Ulamā': Traditional Islam and Modernity in Indonesia* (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1996).

⁶⁷ Abdul Mun'im DZ, "Teologi Pembangunan sebagai alternatif" [Theology of Development as an Alternative], in M. Masyhur Amin, ed., *Teologi Pembangunan: Paradigma Baru Pemikiran Islam* (Yogyakarta: NU, 1989), 229-33.

⁶⁸ For this topic see Karel Steenbrink, "Towards a Pancasila Society: the Indonesian Debate on Secularization, Liberation and Development," *Exchange* 54 (1989): 1-28. Only a few publications can be mentioned of Indonesian Muslims who are in favor of some form of a theology of liberation. M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Perspektif Deklarasi Makkah Menuju Ekonomi Islam* (Bandung: Mizan 1987); referring to the 'Declaration of Mecca' of January 1981, in which a number of Muslim economists designed a socioeconomic strategy along Islamic lines) Alfian a.o., eds., *Kemiskinan Struktural* [On Structural Poverty] (Jakarta: Yayasan Ilmu-ilmu Sosial, 1980), the majority of the contributors are Muslim but there are also some Christian authors. Musa Asy'arie, ed., *Islam, Kebebasan dan perubahan sosial* [Islam, Freedom and Social Change] (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1986), the conference from which these essays originate was organized by an Islamic university, the book published by a Protestant publisher, and the authors were equally divided among Protestants, Catholics and Muslims. M. Dawam Rahardjo, ed., *Seperangkat pemikiran tentang Ekonomi Islam* [Some Thoughts about an Islamic Economy] (Yogyakarta: Ananda, 1985). A. Rifa'i Hassan a.o., eds., *Perspektif Islam dalam Pembangunan Bangsa* [An Islamic Perspective on the Development of our People] (Yogyakarta: PLP2M, 1987).

The Lessons of the Mi'raj of Brawijaya V

The main body of this article was prepared a few weeks before the session of the National Assembly confirming Suharto's reappointment, early March 1998. The economic crisis which hit the country since mid 1997 also caused social and political unrest. Scholars of Indonesia are not unfamiliar with these symptoms: for centuries Indonesian history has known difficult transitions of power. There have been disastrous wars of succession in Java in the seventeenth till the nineteenth century, finally dividing the Sultanate of Mataram into four states, all subjected to colonial power. In this troubled situation it may be useful to recall one of the earlier transfers of power, from the last Hindu Kingdom of Majapahit in inland East Java to the Muslim coastal state of Demak, about 1500.

There are many speculations about the origins of the Muslim rulers of Demak, but harmonizing and conflict-evading Javanese court histories make the first Muslim ruler of Demak, Sultan Raden Fatah, a son of the last Hindu King, Brawijaya V of Majapahit. The difference of religion made the relation between father and son difficult. The son no longer visited his father because "Muslims do not kneel before non-Muslims to kiss their feet. After several calls from his father, the son, now a Sultan with the name of Raden Fatah, goes to the capital of Majapahit with his army. The old ruler and father climbs on the highest building of his capital, sees his son coming, was happy to see him healthy and powerful and *lajeng mcrad lan sabalanipun* . . . the old ruler ascended to heaven with his army." The Javanese *mcrad* has been taken from the Arab *mi'raj*. It stands here not only for the traditional belief that a Hindu king ascended to heaven and was transformed into a manifestation of Vishnu, but also for the similarity to the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad.⁶⁹

On Thursday 21 May 1998, a national holiday in Indonesia because of Ascension Day, President Suharto stepped down. Suharto wanted to become a retired guru, a wise man, a *pandito*. Until now no one has commented, to the best of my knowledge, on the possibility of a relation between the choice of the date of 21 May and the religious meaning of that day, but I would not be surprised if for the non-denominational and open mind of Suharto such a link exists. No conflict, no war, no victorious and no defeated party. That is the long term perspective on the political and religious history of Indonesia.

⁶⁹ *Babad Tanah Jawa* in the so-called Meinsma-Olthof edition (Dordrecht: Foris, 1987; reprint of the 1941 edition by J J Ras), 29-30. For the historical background one can consult, as far as literature in English is concerned, Theodore G Th Pigeaud & H J de Graaf, *Islamic States in Java, 1500-1700* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976).

For those, however, who look closer to the facts at hand, the situation is much more complex. In its first decade, 1912-1925, the Muhammadiyah strengthened its Muslim position in a great openness towards the westernized segments of the colonial society and in a good and open dialogue with representatives of the Christian mission. In its later history, the movement developed a stronger apologetic tradition, still remaining quite open when compared with similar groups in other countries, such as the Jamā'at-i-Islāmī of Pakistan and the Muslim Brothers of Egypt. Between 1965 and 1985 neo-modernists like Dawam Rahardjo and Nurcholis Madjid have also shown a remarkably open position, emphasizing both the general Muslim and the specifically Indonesian character of their movements. Many of their ideas were developed in dialogue with Western and Christian thinkers. Do we see in the 1990s a rejection of the traditional complex religious identity and an emphasis on a single, exclusively Muslim identity? This would not only be a great danger for the existence of the 'new religions,' for the remnants of the tribal religions and for the modern mystical movements, but it could also lead to a setback in Muslim-Christian relations.⁷⁰

*Interuniversity Institute for
Missiological and Ecumenical Research
Utrecht, The Netherlands*

KAREL A. STEENBRINK



⁷⁰ I thank Martin van Bruinessen, Liesbeth Labbeke, Marc de Mey and Cees de Jong for their comments on an earlier draft of this article

MONOTHEISTS AND THE 'OTHER': AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE IN AN ERA OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM*

For monotheists the 'other' may be another monotheist who shares with them the same beliefs but belongs to a different ethnic group, physically, culturally or both, or may be another monotheist with partly different but still monotheistic beliefs. The 'other' may be a non-believer, a polytheist, an atheist or whatever else. People have inborn differences regarding which they have no choice, such as physical characteristics including the color or the language and inherited culture. Besides, there are acquired differences such as wealth and education. Religion stands in the middle between the 'inborn' and 'acquired' differences, since faith is supposed to be decided individually by a personal voluntary conviction, whereas in reality it is mostly inherited. Gender may also be seen as a considerable difference, even within the groups of monotheists who belong to the same ethnic group and share the same belief.

All monotheists believe in the 'One Lord' who has created the entire human race as well as all forms of life and the whole cosmos; and all of creation is under His control, "the Lord of all being." Monotheists ought to look upon the 'other' on the basis of their belief in the Supreme Lord, but they are mostly interlocked in what their physical senses catch, and their interests are often concerned with what is in this world, rather than with 'abstract' matters of faith. Besides, most people are inclined to keep their worldly relations and their relation to the One God in two strictly separate compartments, with no allowance for interaction. If our time is witnessing the barriers shrinking in geography, in time, in space, in the atom and between the concrete substance and energy, isn't it time for a wholesome wholeness of the human being as an essential prerequisite for a wholesome wholeness of humankind? And what can achieve such a wholesome wholeness of the human individual and the entire human race better than a genuine belief in the "one Lord Supreme of all being?"

The Common Origin of all Children of Adam

The Islamic perspective shares with the entire Abrahamic faith the idea that Adam and his female mate represent the origin of all humanity. The Qur'an states that the children of Adam and his wife enjoy the physi-

* The following is, with minor modifications, the text of a lecture presented at Hartford Seminary, Hartford CT, on December 1, 1997.

cal, intellectual, expressive and psychological-spiritual gifts conferred by God on the human species in its totality to dignify the "homo sapiens" (S. 17:70), in order to enable this human species to carry out the 'development' of themselves and of the earth in this world, with which they are entrusted by their Creator (S. 11:61). All human beings are accountable for human and material development, for their own thoughts and actions, and for their relations with the 'other' and with the nature around them.

The diversity of humankind is enriched by the way in which individual and group specialties can complement each other through interaction and cooperation (S. 49:13). The inborn differences represent an enriching variety which is an outstanding sign of God's all-mightiness, all-wisdom, all-providence and all-grace in His relations with His creation (S. 30:22).

With regard to the common origin of humankind, the Qur'ān stresses that Adam and his female mate—and subsequently all men and women—are created from the same "living entity" (*nafs waḥida*), so the first woman is created from the same "living entity" as the first man, and not from a certain part of the first man's body (S. 4:1).¹ According to the Qur'ān, both Adam and his wife shared the same responsibility in eating from the forbidden tree, and both repented to God and were granted forgiveness before carrying out their mission of "development" on earth (S. 7:19-26). In this way, there are no grounds for any gender discrimination from the beginning of time, the creation of the first man and the first woman. Both are equally addressed in the Qur'ān and both, men and women, are specified distinctively, one beside the other, in many verses, underlining the independent responsibility of each and their equality in this respect.²

The Spiritual Essence of All Human Beings

The Qur'ān states that God has breathed into the first human being of His spirit (S. 15:29; 38:72) and that every human being has been initially granted a spiritual compass to direct him/her to the Lord God: "And as your Lord brings forth their offspring for the loins of the children of Adam, and calls upon them to bear witness about themselves 'Am I not your Lord?,' they answer, 'Yes, indeed, we do bear witness thereto.' [Of this We remind you] lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Verily, we were unaware of this,' or lest you say, 'Verily it was but our forefathers who—in times gone by—associated others with God, and we were but their late

¹ See the commentary of Muhammad Abduh and Rashīd Rida on this verse in *Ta'isir al-Manār* 4: 323 ff.; the same Qur'ānic term is also found in S. 6:98; 7:189, 39:6

² E.g. S. 3:195, 9:71-72; 24:12; 30:21; 33:35-36, 58, 73; 47:19, 48:5, 49:11; 57:12, 60:12.

offspring" (S. 7:172-173).³ It is the human responsibility to maintain one's spiritual fitness and development (S. 91:7-10). The successive messages of God have been sent to let human beings make the best of the spiritual equipment that has always existed in every human being. Seen in this perspective, every human being is a "potential" believer, and being human has been inseparable from spirituality since creation. We have to remember this whenever we deal with any human being, whether such a human being maintains and makes use of this invaluable gift of God or not; for in any case, the divine spirit is in all children of Adam and his female mate, and this 'common gift' provides common ground for mutual understanding and compassion. There is no place in monotheism for a monopoly of the truth and arrogance about it, since the truth by its nature is common among all and open to all.

Directing human beings towards their Creator, Lord and Cherisher, is meant to liberate everyone from being subjugated to any degrading power, going from powers within themselves, whims or inferiority and superiority complexes, to pressuring forces of the world around them and of persons who enjoy social, economic, political or any other sort of power over them. Such a unique liberation of the human being cannot be achieved by any philosophy or law, but only by faith in the one God. It simultaneously implants in the human mind and heart that, since the One Unique Supreme Lord is the only one who is incomparable ("there is nothing like Him; S. 42:11; 112:4), all "others" are God's creatures and all human beings are equal in being created with the same potential by the One God. As monotheism establishes human freedom and equality in this way, we can understand how true and significant it is what Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8.32). At an early stage of his life, Jesus went into the synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath and when he stood up to read the Scriptures, there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah, and when he opened the book, he found this passage: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4.16-18; see Isaiah 61.1).

Thus, belief in the One God liberates human beings from within the deepest depth. The liberation of the Israelites from Pharaoh's slavery was fundamentally achieved through the conceptual and spiritual-moral power of the liberating faith in the One God. The Qur'ān indicates that God sent

³ In the renderings of Qur'anic verses throughout this paper use has been made of Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān* (Gibraltar: Dār al-Andalus, 1980), in a number of cases the wording has been modified slightly and a few clarifications have been added in parentheses.

the Prophet to teach people what is right and what is wrong, and by so doing he "lifts from them their burdens and the shackles that were upon them" (S. 7:157). Many Sufis have stated impressively that the deepest level of submission to God is the highest level of human freedom.

Observing the One God in Relations with Others

The belief in the One God, then, aims to benefit the human beings in their relations with 'others,' since God Himself is not affected in his all-mightiness by believing or disbelieving in Him. The Ten Commandments represent the cornerstone in the messages of monotheism and its moral goals. Next to the belief in the One God and the worship of Him alone, come the consequences that this faith has for all human relations, starting with the family and going to all human beings whose lives, families and properties should be secure from any violation (Exodus 20.3-15). In the next two verses (Exodus 20. 16-17) dealing with neighbors is stressed as a starting point in dealing with 'others.'

That faith in the One God has immediate consequences for inter-human relations was emphasized by Jesus when he answered a question about the great commandment in the law: "Jesus said, 'You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and your mind.' And the second is like unto it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 23.35-40; see also Mark 12.28-32, Luke 10.25-28). When Jesus was asked further to define "the neighbor," he gave the well-known parable of "the good Samaritan" who offered help and compassion to the person who needed it, regardless of any difference in faith (Luke 10.29-37).

Now, in an era of globalization, the whole world has become a close neighborhood. The Qur'ān teaches the doing of good to the neighbor from your people, the neighbor who is a stranger, and the friend by your side whoever he/she may be (S. 4:36). Caring for travelers who lost their way or their possessions is repeatedly stressed in the Qur'ān. Even in war, those who leave the enemies' front to seek the Muslims' protection, have to be granted this protection, in addition to a safe passage to the destination they choose (S. 9:6). Prisoners of war, who have to be set free as soon as possible, and all prisoners, should be taken care of in their various needs: physical, intellectual and spiritual-moral (S. 47:4).

Such a genuine understanding, sympathy and cooperation ought to be the outcome of the belief in the All-Merciful, who offers His limitless mercy and grace to all of His creation (S. 21:107). Since the Lord and Cherisher of all human being "makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust," believers in Him ought to reflect God's mercy and grace in their relations with others: "For if you love them

which love you, what reward have you? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you do more than others?" (Matt. 5.45-47).

The Qur'ān endorses the moral commandments of the Torah (S. 2:83), and describes the Torah as containing "guidance and light" (S. 5:44), and as "clearly spelling out everything, and [thus providing] guidance and grace" (S. 6:154). As for God's message revealed in the Gospel, the Qur'ān states that in it "there is guidance and light, confirming the truth of the Torah that has preceded it, and [it was revealed] as a guidance and admonition unto the God-conscious" (S. 5:46). The Qur'ān urges the Jews to follow the Torah (S. 5:43), as it urges the Christians to follow the Gospel (S. 5:47), and has promised the good of this world's life if they do (S. 5:66), in addition to the greatest reward of God in the life to come. As Jesus had emphasized in earlier times that he had not come to destroy the law of the Torah and the teaching of the prophets, but had come to fulfill them, so Muḥammad emphasized that he was merely sent to fulfill what is virtuous. The Qur'ān spells out what this implies: "True virtue and good do not consist in turning you faces towards the east or the west, but truly virtuous and good-doer is the one who believes in God, the Last Day, the angels, the books and the prophets; and spends his substance—however much he [s/he] himself [herself] may cherish it—upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer [who lost his/her way or possessions during a journey], and those who ask for help, and in freeing human beings from bondage, and keeps up the prayer, and renders the purifying [social welfare] dues (*zakāt*); and [truly virtuous and good-doers are] those who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril; it is they that have proved themselves true, and it is they who are conscious of God" (S. 2:177). Justice and kindness, *al-'aḍl wa'l-iḥsān*, concisely represent all virtues, as the Qur'ān sometimes indicates (e.g. S. 16:90). It is significant that early Muslims sought shelter from persecution in Abyssinia with its Christian just king, and were granted asylum there. Ibn Taymīyya, the prominent Muslim jurist (d. 1328), maintained that God lets the just unbelieving power persevere and flourish, while He does not let the unjust Muslim power persevere and flourish.⁴

Human Differences: The Inborn Ones

The inborn differences are, in Qur'anic perspective, a fascinating variety whose components complement one another, and all humanity should work together to reach a true awareness of their various ethnic and cultural characteristics and to secure a peace based on justice. Both are fun-

⁴ Ibn Taymīyya, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad, *al-Ḥisba* (Kuwait, 1983), 9, 91

damental for developing a constructive moral cooperation through the whole world (S. 5:2). Muslim traders, preachers and travelers reached Scandinavia, the Volga basin, Africa beyond the Sahara, and South, South-east and East Asia. Muslims' contributions to the fields of travel, geography and cartography were distinguished. The Muslim assistance, especially that of the Arab navigator Ibn Majid, was invaluable for the Christian Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama (d. 1524) in his naval journey from Portugal to India around the Cape of Good Hope (1497-1499). Muslim scholars provided prominent works on all world religions known to them, not only the Abrahamic sister-religions. Al-Biruni (d. 1048) studied Sanskrit in order to acquire and provide accurate information about the religious beliefs of India in his outstanding work on that subject.

Muslim contributions to human civilization were never limited to Muslims or their non-Muslim partners in Muslim countries. They were always offered to any student, scholar or beneficiary in the fields of physics and optics, chemistry, astronomy and observatories, anatomy, medicine and surgery, art and architecture, irrigation, agriculture and gardening, as well as philosophy and social and human studies. Jews and Christians in medieval Europe were welcomed in their frequent visits to Muslim capitals especially in Muslim Spain, where they sought to benefit from what Muslim scholars had to offer in these various fields. Muslim works translated into Latin enlightened Europe and paved the way for its Renaissance, and thus they paid back the previous Muslims' debt to Europe, when the Greek heritage was translated into Arabic. A constructive and fruitful interaction involved the Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averrões, d. 1198) in debates with another outstanding Muslim thinker and scholar al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111), with the Jewish rabbi and philosopher Maimonides (d. 1204), and with the Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274).

Gender Differences

Men and women have the same human rights and responsibilities—"in charge of one another," as the Qur'ān states—according to each individual's endowments and not to gender. Both men and women have their moral, social and political obligations: "enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong" (S. 9:71). Human dignity is conferred by God on all human beings, whatever their inborn and acquired differences may be, as we have seen above (S. 17:70). This dignity should be secured and sanctioned by law and guarded by the state authorities. However, the Qur'ān always emphasizes that kindness, forgiveness, generosity, and magnanimity ought to go beyond literal justice: "and to forgo what is due to you is more in accord with God-consciousness, and forget not [that you are to act with] grace towards one another" (S. 2: 237), and, as stated elsewhere in the Qur'ān, "good and evil cannot be equal [so]

repel you [evil] with what is better, then the one between whom and yourself was enmity [may then become] as if he [she] had [always] been a true close friend" (S. 41:34). Unfortunately, as most Muslim peoples have become free from colonization, the call for "Islamic law" has been predominant, often at the expense of a deep concern for "Islamic morality."

Religious Differences

Religious freedom is an explicit Qur'anic principle: "No coercion should be [by any means allowed] in matters of faith" (S. 2:256), and the sanctity of houses of worship—be they monasteries, churches, synagogues or mosques, "in all of which God's name is abundantly extolled"—should be secured and defended (S. 22:40). Muslims and non-Muslims have equal rights and responsibilities according to the constitutional document drawn up by the Prophet Muḥammad after his arrival in Medina. A dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims ought to be conducted, objectively and ethically, in the best possible way, the Qur'an teaches (S. 29:46). God alone can judge human beliefs and deeds according to every individual's intention, knowledge and abilities, and no human being has this kind of comprehensive knowledge of another person that is essential for such a judgment. This is a fact which the Qur'an repeatedly stresses.⁵ Of paramount significance are the words of S. 5:48, "Unto each of you [those who are following any of the successive divine messages], we have appointed a law and a way of life; and if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community, but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you through what He has given you [of His guidance]. Vie, then, with one another in good deeds. Unto God you all must return, and then He will let you truly know all that on which you were wont to differ."

With regard to the dialogue with those who share with the Muslims the Abrahamic faith, "the People of the Book," the Qur'an reminds Muslims of the common ground which should always be kept in mind: "And say, 'We believe in that which has been bestowed upon us, as well as that which has been bestowed upon you, and our God and your God is one and the same, and unto Him we submit ourselves'" (S. 29:46), and, in the words of S. 42:15, "And say: 'I believe in whatever [divine] book God has bestowed, and I am bidden to be just and fair with you. God is our Lord as well as He is your Lord, to us shall be accounted our deeds, and to you your deeds. Let there be no contention between us and you, God will bring us all together, for with Him is all journeys' end.'" Anyone who is involved in a dialogue ought to have an open mind and heart and to speak unboastfully, and the Qur'an gives this impressive example of language

⁵ E.g. S. 2:113; 3:55, 16:124; 22:17, 69; 32:25; 39:3, 46

which sets the tone for any constructive discussion, assures the equality of all participants, and removes any mistrust or fear of prejudice: "And behold, either we or you are on the right path or have clearly gone astray. Say: 'Neither shall you be called to account for whatever we may have become guilty of, nor shall we be called to account for whatever you are doing.' Say: 'Our Lord will bring us all together [on the Day of Judgment], and then he will lay open the truth between us in justice, for He alone is the One who opens all truth, the All-knowing'" (S. 34:24-26).

The Use of Force

Muslims are only allowed to fight against aggression, whatever the ethnicity, faith or opinion of the aggressors may be. Non-Muslims have to be fought against when they commit aggression, not because they are non-Muslims (S. 2:190; 4:75; 22:39-40; 60:8-9). The Muslims also have to be fought against when they commit aggression (S. 49:9). However, Muslims are taught by the Qurʾān to strive for peace, even if there are doubts about others' sincerity: "And if they incline to peace, incline you to it as well, and place your trust in God. . . And should they seek but to deceive you [by pretending to want peace], behold, God is enough for you" (S. 8:61-62). The Qurʾān teaches that peaceful and friendly relations should always be considered as a future possibility, even in times of inevitable confrontation: "It may well be that God will bring about [mutual] affection between you and those of whom you [now] face as enemies; and God is All-powerful, and God is Much-forgiving and Most-gracious" (S. 60:7). It is historically significant that the early confrontation between Muslims and Jews in Arabia during the Prophet's time did not go beyond that time and place, and constructive relations between them existed in other countries under the caliphs, especially in Muslim Spain (Andalus). The Abbāsid Caliph al-Ma'mūn (813-833) offered the Byzantines—the constant neighboring enemy of the Muslim caliphate—a permanent peace and the payment of two thousand gold pieces in his message to Emperor Theophilus (829-842) if the latter agreed to allow a mathematician called Leo to come to Baghdad and teach there for some time, and this would be considered by the caliph as a gesture of goodwill. Unfortunately, the emperor did not respond positively to the caliph's message, and the hostilities continued.⁶ But the memories of these hostilities did not affect the relationship forever. The crusades were forgotten by many through the passing of time, and even colonization with all its aggression and injustice did not revive

⁶ A. A. Vasiliev, "Byzantium and Islam," in *Byzantium*, ed. by N H Baynes and H St L B. Moss (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948). An Arabic translation of this chapter has been added to Husayn Mo'nis and Zayid's translation of Baynes' book *The Byzantine Empire* (1926), under the title *al-Imbarāḡūriyya al-Bizantiyya* (Caro, n.d.), 380.

for everyone the memory of the crusades, and the two were not *always* correlated in the literature of the Muslims' struggle for independence.

The Acquired Differences

As the inborn human differences represent a wonder of God's creation and offer the potential of an enrichment of the human capability and productivity, so there is a very positive aspect also to the acquired differences that are, in Qur'anic perspective, natural and permanent, since a universal human consensus from all people in all times is impossible. Such diverse human views represent different angles of vision and various points of view with regard to a particular issue. And such an intellectual variety enriches the discussion of any matter, reduces the risk of human limitations and errors, and can lead to a better understanding of any point and consequently to the most responsible decision regarding related issues. This fact has been explicitly stated in the Qur'ān: "And had your Lord so willed, He could surely have made all humankind one single community; but [He willed it otherwise, and so] they continue to have differences [all of them], save those upon whom your Lord has bestowed His grace [as they follow His guidance in dealing with their differences]; and for such a test [in handling constructively their differences and maintaining their good relations] He has created them all" (S. 11:118-119). The Muslims are not immune from this natural law, their differences are also very human, and they have to tackle them objectively (S. 4:59) and ethically.⁷ The argument with Muslims or non-Muslims should be pursued conceptually and behaviorally in the best way (S. 16:125 and the earlier quoted verse S. 29:46).

However, maintaining good relations with all "others" who have different views has to go hand in hand with the readiness to express one's own position openly and clearly. The expression of one's views about what is right and what is wrong is a right and an obligation which the Qur'ān calls "enjoining the doing of what is right and good and forbidding the doing of what is wrong and evil," *al-amr bi'l-mar'ūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar*. It is a right and responsibility of every human being, and those who follow the Abrahamic faith, Muslims and the People of the Book, should together seek to fulfill this duty (S. 3:104, 114). A child should be brought up so as to initially discern and, when it becomes possible, to express himself/herself about what is right and what is wrong (S. 31:17). Every human being is a witness in this life and should testify honestly about what he/she has witnessed, and this responsibility should be se-

⁷ E.g. S. 16:125; 4:148, 23:3, 28:55, 41:34-36, 49:6, 9:12

cured and protected (S. 2:282-283). The right and obligation of peaceful association for legitimate purposes, occasionally or permanently, must also be secured for all, since freedom of expression is meaningless if it does not apply to individuals who are weak in facing social or political forces. Enjoining the doing of what is right and forbidding the doing of what is wrong may necessitate an organized collective effort, and therefore the Qur'an mostly uses the plural for the verb and its subjects, although the individual freedom of expression has always to be secured. Christian parades raising crosses and religious signs have been inseparable from securing the freedom of faith in the early history of Islam.

The Environment

Islam extends the duty of good behavior to include others in this universe than only human beings. People should maintain and develop natural resources such as earth, water and air, and they should secure life for all living creatures as long as they are not causing harm. Muslims should not cut trees or kill birds and other animals, even during war, except when necessary and when justified for other reasons. Pilgrimage is a religious training obligation to refrain from causing harm to human beings, animals and trees.

The Bitter Reality

The realities of our contemporary world are very far from, or even entirely opposite to, such lofty ideals, among believers and non-believers, among monotheists and non-monotheists, among Muslims and non-Muslims. Many monotheists, including many Muslims, who themselves adhere to certain way of thinking and a certain pattern of behavior, also believe that all good people have to fit in their frame. Tolerating differences in "others" has not become fundamental in our thinking nor in our faith, where dogma has overshadowed morality and behavior. Diversity within unity has not yet been recognized as being essential among Muslims and among all human beings. Horrible crimes are committed in the name of religion all over the world: in Northern Ireland, in Bosnia, in Algeria, in the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka and elsewhere. "Ethnic-cleansing" has become a familiar term in the political glossary, and ethnic conflicts cover the whole world; the ethnic mass massacres in Africa South of the Sahara are just one tragic example. Conflicts resulting from ethnic and religious differences, or born from chauvinistic nationalism and a fanatic following of ideologies, have been happening all through history, and Muslims and monotheists have not been an exception. Furthermore, modern technology and evil growth of terrorism and weapons

of mass destruction have contributed to horrible practices aimed at destroying the "others," efforts that would bring with them a total self-destruction of the whole human race.

The "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" issued by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1968, followed by other resolutions of later international conferences in Helsinki, Vienna and Beijing, represent some hope within the thick darkness of the present situation. But the Declaration requires significant organizational reforms and needs a fundamental moral base. Spiritual morality has to be spread through universal and national mass communications and education, and has to be nurtured by all our institutions. Monotheists have to stand together in developing a monotheistic morality among believers in the One God, and morality in general among all people everywhere. Monotheists, especially Muslims and Christians, are present all over the planet and have powerful institutions, while many of them enjoy influential positions. The coordination of their concerted efforts would become a mighty power in safeguarding and reinforcing our era of an essentially pluralistic globalism. Detailed plans and practical applications can definitely be worked out in all circumstances, for the well-known saying always proves to be true: "When there is a will, there is a way."

There is the urgent call of the Gospel: "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11.28), "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward all human beings" (Luke 2.14). And the challenge of the Qur'an is equally clear: "O you who have attained to faith! Enter wholly into peace, and follow not Satan's footsteps" (S. 2:208). We believe in God's promise: "And for those who strive hard in Our cause, We shall most certainly guide them onto paths that lead to Us, for God is indeed with the doers of good" (S. 29:69).

*Institute for the Study of Islam
in the Contemporary World
Los Angeles, California*

FATHI OSMAN



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